

"In the Latter Days, the sun shall rise from the West"

Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)



## Prayer

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# The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as)



AHMADIYYA  
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

*United States of America*

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 207 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjab province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah).

The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity.

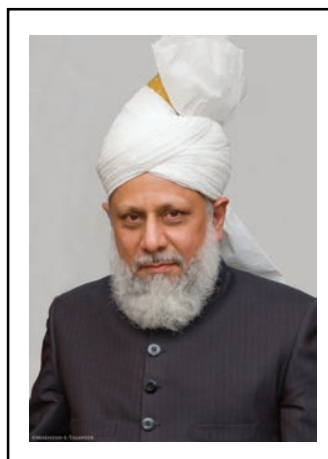
Hazrat Ahmad (as) proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (The Holy Qur'an: 98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon Qura'nic teaching:

“There is no compulsion in religion” (The Holy Qur'an: 2:257).

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah (as).

[www.alislam.org](http://www.alislam.org)  
[www.muslimsunrise.com](http://www.muslimsunrise.com)



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad,  
Khalifatul Masih V (aba)

# The Muslim Sunrise

[www.muslimsunrise.com](http://www.muslimsunrise.com)

The Muslim Sunrise is published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA, 15000 Good Hope Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905, Phone 301-879-0110, Fax 301-879-0115, under the auspices of Dr. Mirza Maghfoor Ahmad, Ameer/National President. The views and opinions expressed by individual contributors in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (ra) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the Muslim Sunrise, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever-changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presents their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

The Muslim Sunrise welcomes letters to the Editor, Questions and Submissions.

Email us at [MuslimSunrise@Ahmadiyya.us](mailto:MuslimSunrise@Ahmadiyya.us) or go online to [www.MuslimSunrise.com](http://www.MuslimSunrise.com)



## Acronyms for salutations used in this publication

- sa: Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wa Sallam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)  
as: 'Alaihis-Salam (may peace be upon him)  
ra: Radhi-Allahu 'Anhu/'Anha (may Allah be pleased with him/her)  
rh: Rahimahullahu Ta'ala (may Allah shower His mercy on him)  
aba: Ayyadahullahu Ta'ala Bi-Nasrihil-'Aziz (may Allah support him with His mighty help)

Verse numbers in the references from the Holy Qur'an count Tasmiya at the beginning of a chapter as the first verse.

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaihis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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# FROM THE HOLY QUR'AN

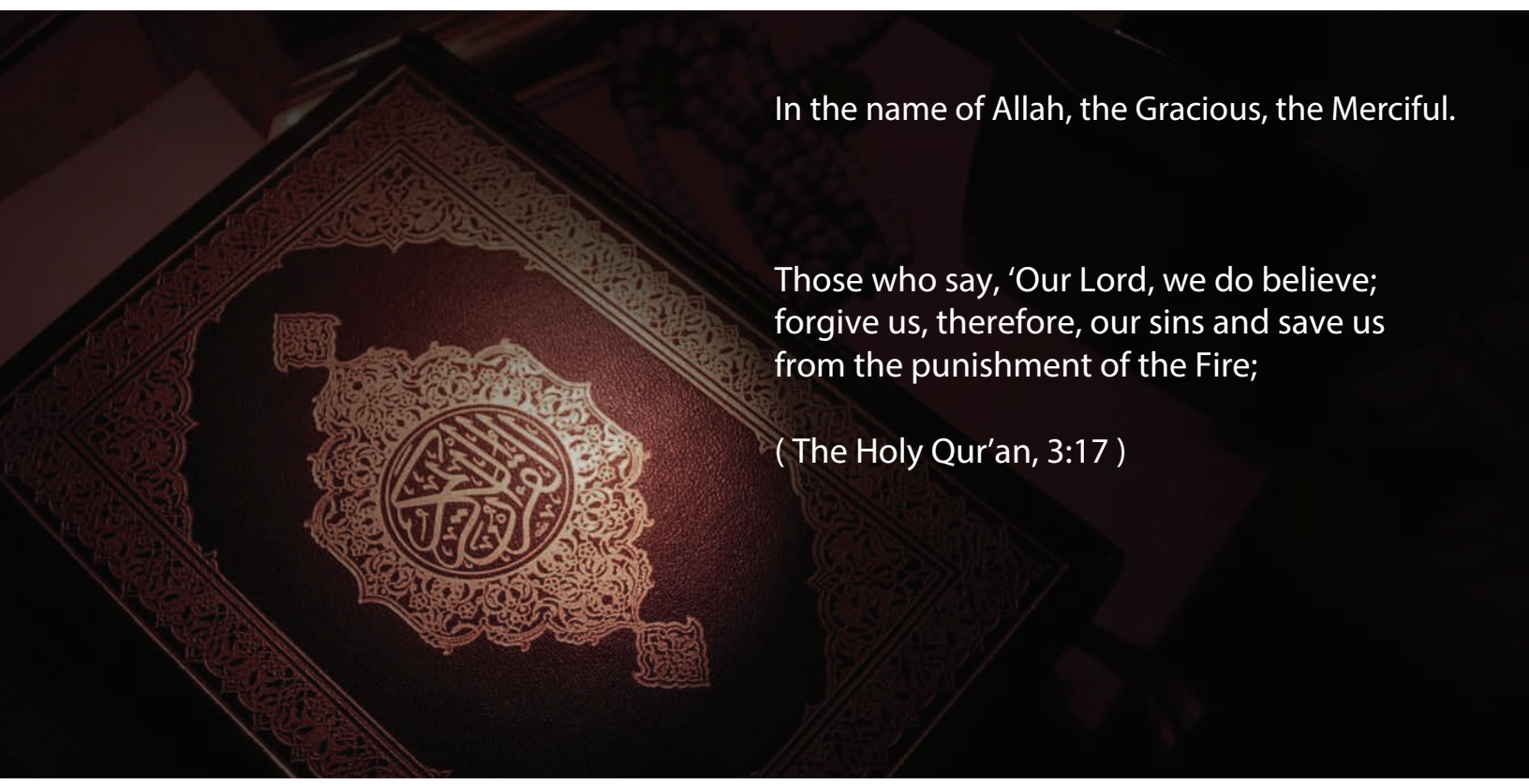
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①

الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا أَمَّا فَأَغْفِرْ لَنَا  
ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ②

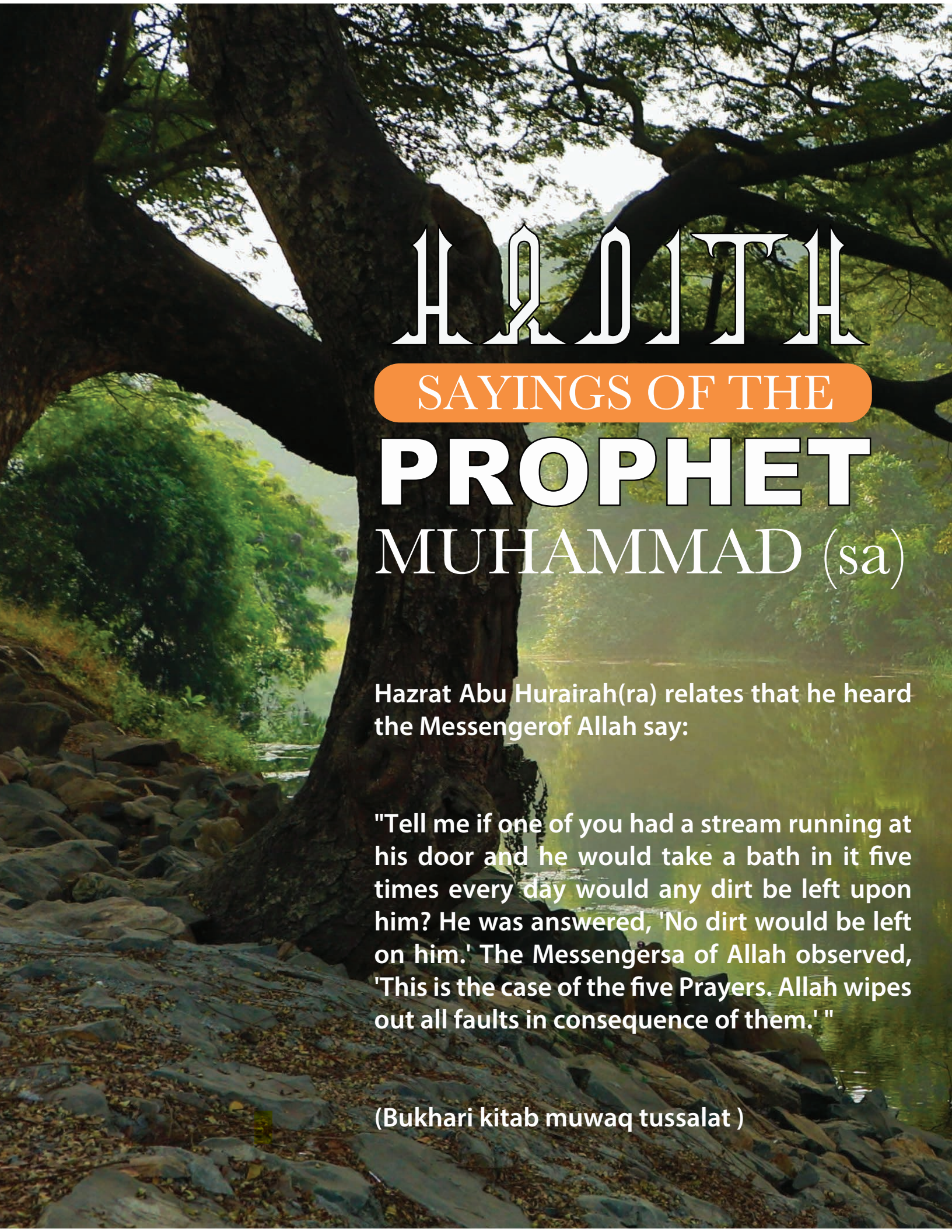
In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

Those who say, 'Our Lord, we do believe;  
forgive us, therefore, our sins and save us  
from the punishment of the Fire;

(The Holy Qur'an, 3:17)







# ADITH

SAYINGS OF THE

# PROPHET

## MUHAMMAD (sa)

Hazrat Abu Hurairah(ra) relates that he heard the Messenger of Allah say:

"Tell me if one of you had a stream running at his door and he would take a bath in it five times every day would any dirt be left upon him? He was answered, 'No dirt would be left on him.' The Messenger of Allah observed, 'This is the case of the five Prayers. Allah wipes out all faults in consequence of them.' "

(Bukhari kitab muwaq tussalat )



# EDITORIAL

## FALL 2018

Prayer is universal and it never ceases to bear its significance in our daily lives. All major world religions, including faith traditions that may be silent about God, do engage in earnest prayer in its numerous forms. On individual level, saints as well as sinners pray in diverse ways for differing reasons: Communication with the Divine, begging for the fulfillment of desperate needs, removal of difficulties, asking forgiveness of sins, and seeking a living relationship with the Loving Creator – all these are attempted to be realized through prayer.

Historically speaking, Islam teaches that God Himself taught Adam and Eve how to pray and what to pray. Then, all the Prophets and Messengers of God incessantly prayed for themselves and their people: Prayers of Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Job, Luqman, David, Solomon, Saleh, Yahya (John the Baptist) and Jesus (peace be on all of them) are well documented in the Holy Scriptures. Many prayers made by pious and spiritual women are also recorded. The Holy Quran commands Prophet Muhammad (sa) to prayer constantly; and he did pray day and night. According to the Holy Quran, even angels do pray, and seek blessings of God for the betterment of individuals.

In this issue of the Muslim Sunrise, we have tried to cover various aspects on the theme of prayer. Why to pray? What are the etiquettes of praying? How does prayer help healing? What is the relation between prayer and action? How closely are prayer and meditation related? What is the significance of prayer in many world religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity? How Islam elevates the stature of prayer by placing a most comprehensive prayer – Al-Fateha – at the very beginning of the Holy Quran, and making it obligatory to pray each and every day? Many prayers of the Holy Quran and of the Holy

Prophet Muhammad (as) are brought together in an extremely significant sermon of Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V, Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba)

Please, read and enjoy all the articles and give us your feedback.

**Mubasher Ahmad**  
**Editor-in-Chief**





# IN THE WORDS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH<sup>(as)</sup>

## Supplication

### To Supplicate is Human and to Respond is Divine

When a child being driven by hunger cries for milk, then milk is generated in the mother's breasts. The child does not know what prayer is, but his cries draw the milk. This is a universal experience. Sometimes when the mother does not perceive the presence of milk in her breasts, the child's cries help to draw it. Then can our cries before God Almighty draw nothing? They certainly draw everything. But those sightless ones, who parade themselves as scholars and philosophers, cannot see it. If a person were to reflect on the philosophy of prayer, keeping in mind the connection and relationship which a child has with its mother, he would find it easy to understand.

The second type of mercy comes into operation after supplication. Go on asking and you will go on receiving. 'Pray to Me, I will answer your prayer' (40:61) is not mere verbiage, but is a characteristic of human nature. To supplicate is human to respond is Divine. He who does not understand and does not believe is false. The illustration of the child that I have set forth expounds the philosophy of prayer in an excellent way.

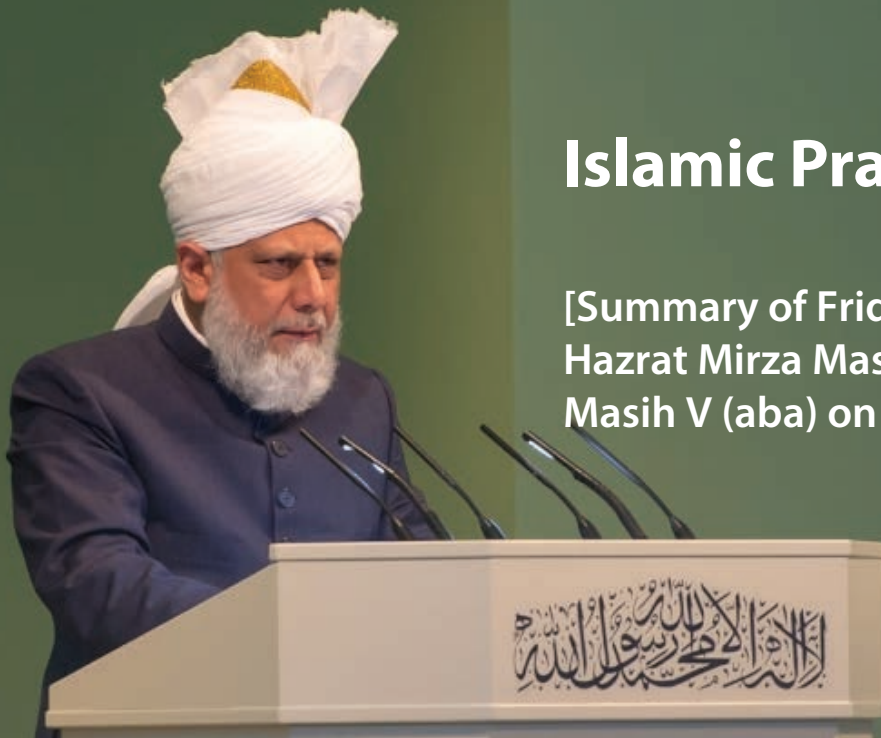
[Malfuzat, vol. 1, pp. 129-130]

It is at a time of trial that the wonderful and rare qualities and effects of prayer are manifested. The truth is that our God is recognized only through prayers.

[Malfuzat, vol. III, p. 201]



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian,  
The Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi (as)



# Islamic Prayers

[Summary of Friday Sermon delivered by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V (aba) on June 15, 2018]

After reciting the Tashahhud, Ta'wwuz, and Surah Al-Fatihah, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) stated:

While mentioning the importance of Jumu'ah, the Holy Prophet (sa) said on one occasion, "There comes such an hour on (Friday), which, if a Muslim encounters while standing in prayer, then whatever supplication he makes, it is accepted or whatever goodness he asks for, it is granted to him by Allah the Exalted."

Everyone supplicates during prayers according to their own thinking or need. There are also some, who, although offer the prayer, but are not moved to make any special supplications. They simply offer the prayers, repeat the words of the Salat and consider it to be sufficient. They are unaware of the importance of prayer.

Thus, today, during this last Jumu'ah of Ramadan, I deemed it appropriate to recite certain prayers, so that those who are not sufficiently aware may also understand the significance of prayers and so that we, as a Community, may present our prayers and supplications before Allah the Exalted and then collectively pray for the acceptance of these supplications during the Salat.

I will now recite some Qur'anic prayers and some related from the Holy Prophet (sa). Those, who remember them, should recite them silently or rather those, who are able to, should, by all means, recite them silently and also continue saying 'Ameen' quietly.

May Allah the Exalted accept our prayers!

"Holy is Allāh and worthy of all Praise; Holy is Allāh ,the Great. Allāh, bestow Your blessings on Muhammad and the people of Muhammad."

Firstly, there are the following Qur'anic prayers:

Our Lord, grant us good in this world as well as good in the world to come, and protect us from the torment of the Fire. (2:202)

Our Lord, pour forth upon us steadfastness and cause us to die resigned unto Thee.' (7:127)

Our Lord, send down to us a table from heaven spread with food that it may be to us a festival, to the first of us and to the last of us, and a Sign from Thee; and provide sustenance for us, for Thou art the Best of sustainers. (5:115)

Our Lord, we have heard a Crier calling us unto faith, 'Believe ye in your Lord,' and we have believed. Our Lord, forgive us, therefore, our errors and remove from us our evils, and in death number us with the righteous. (3:194)

Our Lord, we believe in that which Thou hast sent down and we follow this Messenger. So write us down among those who bear witness. (3:54)

Our Lord, let not our hearts become perverse after Thou hast guided us; and bestow on us mercy from Thyself; surely, Thou alone art the Bestower. (3:9)

My Lord, grant me from Thyself pure offspring; surely, Thou art the Hearer of prayer. (3:39)

Our Lord, grant us of our wives and children the delight of our eyes, and make us a model for the righteous. (25:75)

My Lord, grant me the power that I may be grateful for Thy favour which Thou hast bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and that I may do such good works as may please Thee. And make my seed righteous for me. I do turn to Thee; and, truly, I am of those who submit to Thee. (46:16)

My Lord, grant me a righteous heir. (37:101)

My Lord, I am in need of whatever good Thou mayest send down to me. (28:25)

My Lord, grant me the will and power to be grateful for Thy favour which Thou hast bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and to do such good works as would please Thee, and admit me, by Thy mercy, among Thy righteous servants.' (27:20)  
My Lord, I seek refuge in Thee from the incitements of the evil ones. And I seek refuge in Thee, my Lord, lest they come near me.' (23:98-99)

O my Lord, increase me in knowledge. (20:115)

My Lord, open out for me my breast, and ease for me my task, and loose the knot of my tongue, that they may understand my speech. (20:26-29)

Our Lord, bestow on us mercy from Thyself, and provide for us right guidance in our affair. (18:11)

My Lord, make my entry a good entry and then make me come forth with a good forthcoming. And grant me from Thyself a helping power. (17:81)

My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me in my childhood. (17:25)

My Lord, bestow wisdom on me and join me with the righteous; and give me a true reputation among posterity; and make me one of the inheritors of the Garden of Bliss; (26:84-86)

My Lord, I have wronged my soul, therefore forgive me. (28:17)

Our Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us; surely Thou hast power over all things. (66:9)

Our Lord, we believe; forgive us therefore our sins, and have mercy on us; for Thou art the Best of those who show mercy. (23:110)

Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves; and if Thou forgive us

not and have not mercy on us, we shall surely be of the lost. (7:24)

Our Lord, put us not with the unjust people. (7:48)

My Lord, leave me not childless, and Thou art the Best of inheritors. (21:90)

My Lord, if Thou wilt show me that with which they are threatened. My Lord, then place me not with the wrongdoing people. (23:94-95)

Our Lord, Thou dost comprehend all things in Thy mercy and knowledge. So forgive those who repent and follow Thy way; and protect them from the punishment of Hell. And make them, our Lord, enter the Gardens of Eternity which Thou hast promised them, as well as such of their fathers and their wives and their children as are virtuous. Surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise. And protect them from evils; and he whom Thou dost protect from evils on that day — him hast Thou surely shown mercy. And that indeed is the supreme triumph. (40:8-10)

Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in the faith, and leave not in our hearts any rancour against those who believe. Our Lord! Thou art indeed Compassionate, Merciful. (59:11)

My Lord, forgive me and my parents, and him who enters my house as a believer, and the believing men and the believing women; and increase Thou not the wrongdoers but in perdition. (71:29)

Our Lord, give us what Thou hast promised to us through Thy Messengers; and disgrace us not on the Day of Resurrection. Surely, Thou breakest not Thy promise. (3:195)

Thou art our Protector; forgive us then and have mercy on us, for Thou art the Best of those who forgive. (7:156)

Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of Hell; for the punishment thereof is a lasting torment. (25:66)

Our Lord, we do believe; forgive us, therefore, our sins and save us from the punishment of the Fire. (3:17)

My Lord, make me observe Prayer, and my children too. Our Lord! bestow Thy grace on me and accept my prayer. Our Lord, grant forgiveness to me and to my parents and to the believers on the day when the reckoning will take place. (14:41-42)

My Lord, save me and my family from what they do. (26:170)  
My Lord, my people have treated me as a liar. Therefore judge



Thou decisively between me and them; and save me and the believers that are with me. (26:118-119)

Help me, my Lord, against the wicked people. (29:31)

I am overcome, so come Thou to my help! (54:11)

Our Lord, do not punish us, if we forget or fall into error; and our Lord, lay not on us a responsibility as Thou didst lay upon those before us. Our Lord, burden us not with what we have not the strength to bear; and efface our sins, and grant us forgiveness and have mercy on us; Thou art our Master; so help us Thou against the disbelieving people. (2:287)

O our Lord, pour forth steadfastness upon us, and make our steps firm, and help us against the disbelieving people. (2:251)

'Our Lord, forgive us our errors and our excesses in our conduct, and make firm our steps and help us against the disbelieving people.' (3:148)

O our Lord, decide Thou between us and between our people with truth, and Thou art the Best of those who decide. (7:90)  
Our Lord, make us not a trial for the wrongdoing people. And deliver us by Thy mercy from the disbelieving people. (10:86-87)

O my Lord, help me, for they have treated me as a liar. (23:27)

My Lord! build for me a house with Thee in the Garden; and deliver me from Pharaoh and his work, and deliver me from the wrongdoing people; (66:12)

Now, there are some prayers from the Ahadith (sayings of the Holy Prophet (sa)). It is narrated that the Holy Prophet (sa) taught this prayer, 'O Allah! Forgive me my mistakes, protect me from the evil of my lack of knowledge, ignorance and injustice in my affairs and safeguard me from every harm and evil, which You are aware of far greater than I myself. O Allah! Forgive me my mistakes. Forgive all of my mistakes, whether they were committed knowingly, unknowingly or in a manner of a joke, as they are all within me. Forgive all of my mistakes, which I have already committed and which I have not yet committed; those which I committed secretly and those which I committed openly. You are the One, Who causes people to progress and regress and only You are Powerful over all things. Then, there is (another) prayer of the Holy Prophet (sa).

'O Allah! I have taken on Your obedience, I trust in You, believe in You, and incline towards You. With Your help I pit myself against the enemy. I have come to You for judgement in my case, so forgive all my past and future sins, the secret and the obvious ones. You cause people to advance and also restrain

them. There is none worthy of worship except You.'

'O Allah! You are my Lord, there is none worthy of worship except You. You created me and I am Your servant. And I am steadfast in Your covenant and Your promise to the best of my capability. I seek refuge in You from the evil effects of my deeds. I acknowledge Your blessings and favours. I confess my sins, so You forgive me, as there is none except You who forgives sins.'  
'O Allah! I seek Your deliverance from a heart which is devoid of fear, a prayer which is not accepted, a self which knows no contentment, and the knowledge which is not beneficial. My Guardian, I seek shelter from these four things.'

'O the Convertor of Hearts, make my heart steadfast on Your faith.'

'O Allah! I beg You to grant me guidance and Your fear. I beg You for chastity and contentment.'

'We take You as a shield against whatever is in their (enemy's) heart. We seek protection against every evil of theirs and its dangerous effects.'

O Allah, I implore You for Your love and the love of those who love You and also such conduct as should lead me to Your love. O Allah, make Your love dearer to me than my soul and my family and my wealth and dearer to me than cold water.

Then there is a lengthy prayer, which is narrated from Hazrat Ibn Abbas (ra), that he heard the Holy Prophet (sa) recite the following prayer:

O Allah, I seek Your mercy, which can guide my heart and accomplish my affairs. Bestow success upon my disorganized affairs. Unite me with my separated loved one. Grant dignity to those who are with me. Purify my actions. Inspire me with wisdom and guidance. Bestow upon me things that I love and save me from every evil. O Allah, grant me such faith and the certainty that prevents disbelief. And bestow upon me such grace, which make me recipient of Your generosity in this world and in the Hereafter.

O Allah, make every decision of mine fruitful, grant me the company of martyrs and the life of Your obedient servants and victory over enemies. O Lord, I have come to Your threshold with my needs. Although my thinking is faulty and my planning is weak, I still depend on Your mercy. So, O the Arbiter of all affairs and Bestower of peace of mind, I beg you to save me from the punishment of the Fire, as You save people from the raging seas. Protect me from perdition and the trials of the grave.

O my Lord, Grant me those things which I have not even

thought about. The matters which I have not even begged of You. The good things for which the intention has not yet arisen, but You have promised these blessings to any of Your servants or You are going to give these blessings to any of Your creation, I too have desire for them O Lord of the Universe, I beseech you in the name of Your mercy to grant me every such blessing.

O Allah, the Firm Friend and the Master of guidance and wisdom, I beg You to grant me peace on the day of Resurrection. In the eternal period I am desirous of attaining Paradise in the company of Your pious people, who bow and prostrate before You, and who fulfil their covenants. Surely, You are Gracious and loving. Without doubt You do what You will.

O Allah, make us such guided leaders who do not go astray themselves and do not lead others astray. Make us harbingers of peace for Your loved ones and enemy of Your enemies. I beg You in the name of Your love, to make us love everyone who loves You and make us, for Your sake, hostile to Your enemies.

O Allah, this is our humble supplication. Its acceptance depends on You. This prayer is all we have laboured for. We now, put our complete trust in You.

O Allah, enlighten my heart for me, light up my grave, put light in front of me and behind me, put light on my right and on my left, put light above me and beneath me, enlighten my sight and my hearing, brighten up my hair and skin, fill my flesh and blood with light, and make light penetrate into my bones. O Lord, increase light in my heart and bestow such light on me that it makes me an embodiment of light.

Holy is the One, Who presides over the universe with greatness. Holy is the Being, excepting Whom praising anyone else is not justified. Holy is the Bestower of blessings and favours. Holy is the Lord of Honour and Glory. His is the Majesty and Honour.

Then, there are the prayers of the Promised Messiah (as). The Promised Messiah (as) wrote a prayer for one of his companions in a letter:

This prayer was written for Chaudhry Rustam Ali Sahib.

“O One Who is worthy to be loved than all other beloveds! Forgive me and bestow Your Mercy and enumerate me amongst Your devotees. We are Your sinful servants and we have been consumed by our inner desires. Forgive us and save us from the afflictions of the hereafter.”

The Promised Messiah (as) once wrote a letter to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I (ra) and drew his attention to the following prayer:

“O Benevolent God! I am a worthless, sinful and heedless servant of Yours. You have seen me commit injustices upon

injustices but bestowed Your rewards upon rewards and You have seen me commit sin upon sin and yet you bestowed your favour upon favour. You have always concealed my flaws and granted me Your countless bounties. Thus, even now show Mercy on this unworthy and sinful one and forgive me for my boldness and ungratefulness. Alleviate this sorrow of mine – for there is none else save You who can help.”

The prayer taught by the Promised Messiah (as) in order to completely immerse oneself in God:

“O Lord of all the worlds! I cannot express enough gratitude for Your favours. You are ever so Merciful and Gracious. You have bestowed innumerable favours upon me, forgive my sins lest I perish. Grant me such pure love for You in my heart so that I am given a new life and conceal my faults. Enable me to do such deeds which please You. I seek refuge with Your Holy Countenance from incurring Your wrath. Have Mercy upon me, have Mercy upon me, have Mercy upon me! Save me from the tribulations of this life and the hereafter for every kind of Grace and Blessing is in Your hands. Amen”

We should also remember the Muslim world in general in our prayers. May God Almighty create unity amongst them and may He remove the division in their hearts and unite them. May God Almighty create the spirit of contentment within all Ahmadis, men and women alike. May He save them from every evil and grant them steadfastness. May they always remain attached to the Nizam-e-Jama'at (administrative structure of the community) and the institution of Khilafat. May He also grant the Nizam-e-Jama'at the ability to fulfil the due rights of the Jama'at and enable the office-bearers to truly understand their responsibilities. May He enable all the Waqifeen (life-devotees) to render their services with the true spirit of Waqf (dedication).

May God Almighty protect us from the wicked ploys of the Dajjal and its evils. May God Almighty stop the hands of all those powers who seek to weaken Muslims and protect them from its evils. May God Almighty elevate the status of the martyrs of Ahmadiyyat and He Himself protect their loved ones that they leave behind. May He grant the means to free those who have been imprisoned due to Ahmadiyyat. May God Almighty alleviate the difficulties of all those who are immersed in any kind of trouble. May He cure all those who are suffering from ailments. May God Almighty alleviate the difficulties of everyone, whether they are facing them for political reasons or religious reasons. There are now only a few Darveesh who remain in Qadian. Some people in Qadian are going through hardships. Similarly, those living in Pakistan, especially Rabwah, their circumstances are being made harder and harder by the government and they are making efforts in Pakistan to further complicate the situation of the Ahmadis.

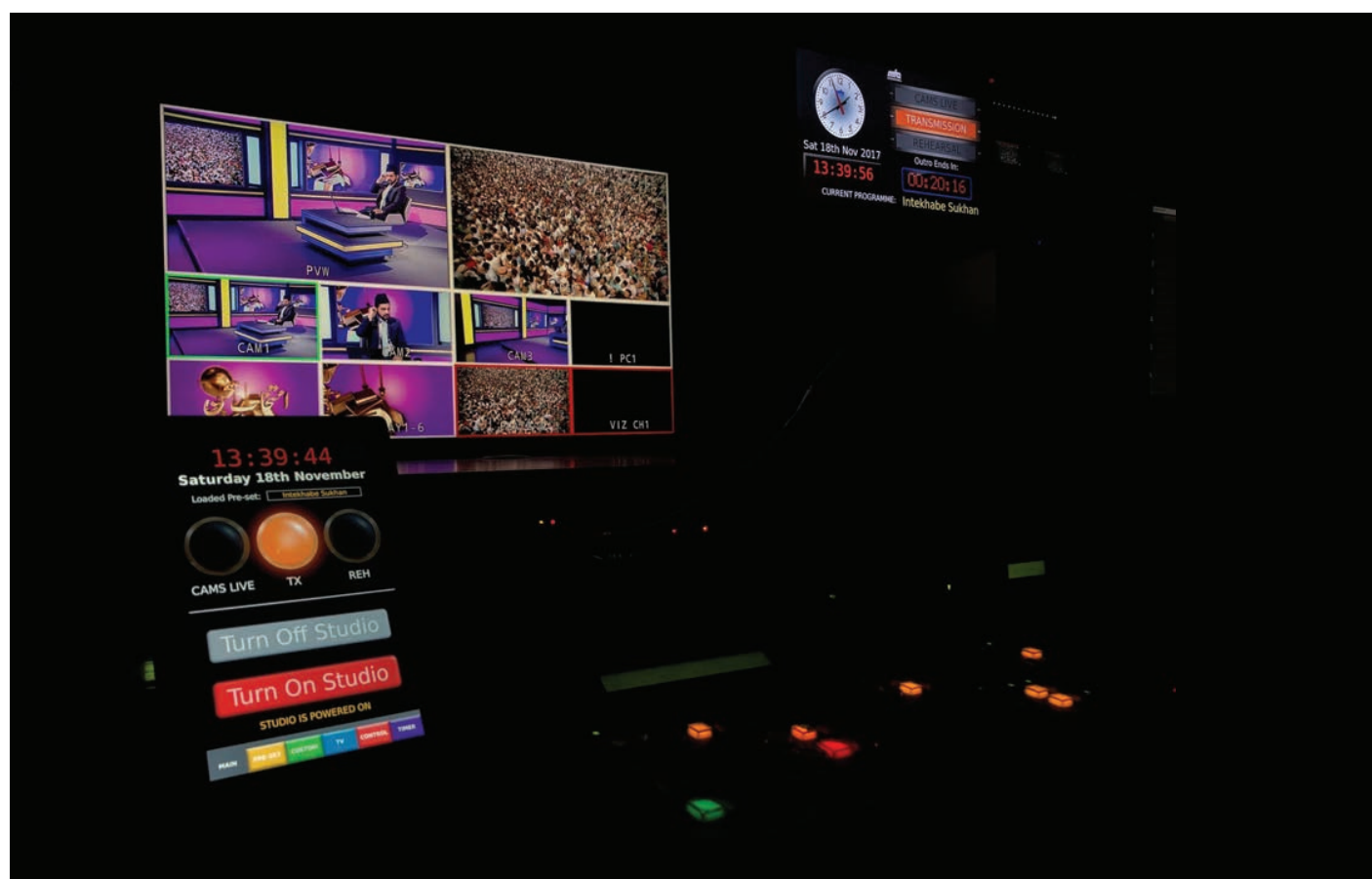
May Allah also protect them from the oppressors and improve their situation. Similarly, in Indonesia whenever they have an opportunity the wrongdoers are treating the Ahmadis cruelly. May Allah also keep them under His protection and guard them from the evil of the enemies

As has been mentioned previously regarding Muslim countries that the violent attacks in Yemen have recommenced, due to the altercations of groups in Iraq and Syria and due to differences amongst the tribes Muslims are killing other Muslims. May Allah grant those fighting in Yemen, Syria and Iraq understanding and enable them to act upon the true teachings of the Prophet, and may He enable them to accept the Mahdi and Messiah. So that they may be saved from the wrong path which they are treading on and that their life in this world and the next may be saved.

Furthermore, may Allah bless the wealth and lives of those who are making sacrifices and contributing towards the different Chandas of the Jama'at. MTA is playing a vital role towards propagating the message nowadays, may Allah reward all the workers of MTA and the volunteers and enable them to serve even more than before. May Allah the Almighty grant MTA Africa knowledge and understanding and enable them to make better programmes to spread the true message of Islam in their countries and to the world at large.



HAZRAT MIRZA MASROOR AHMAD, KHALIFATUL MASIH V,  
SUPREME HEAD OF THE WORLDWIDE AHMADIYYA MUSLIM COMMUNITY





# Prayers of the Holy Qur'an

Karimullah Zirvi

The concept of prayer and acceptance of prayer, particularly a prayer done in distress, is as old as mankind. When Hazrat Adam (as) tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree by mistake, God Almighty taught him the following words for supplication:

When Hazrat Adam (as) recited these words of prayer, God Almighty accepted his prayer and relieved him of his distress. (Al-durr al-Manthural-Suyuti)

قَالَ رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا  
وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

They said, 'Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves; and if Thou forgive us not and have not mercy on us, we shall surely be of the lost. (7:24)

Again, when the disobedient son of Hazrat Noah (as) was to die, Hazrat Noah (as) prayed innocently for the safety of his son. However, God Almighty informed him that his son was not of his (spiritual) family and that his actions were not pious. On realizing this, Hazrat Noah (as) supplicated:

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ  
وَإِلَّا تَغْفِرْ لِي وَتَرْحَمْنِي أَكُنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

He said: 'My Lord, I beg Thee to protect me from asking Thee that whereof I have no knowledge. And unless Thou forgive me and have mercy on me, I shall be among the losers. (11:48)

Upon his supplication, God Almighty gave him the glad tidings of peace and blessings.

When Hazrat Yunus (as) (Jonah) was swallowed by a fish, he besought God while in the belly of the fish with the following words:

وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ  
فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ  
إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

And remember Dha'l-Nun, when he went away in anger, and he thought that We would never cause him distress and he cried out in depths of darkness, saying, 'There is no God but Thou, Holy art Thou. I have indeed been of the wrongdoers.' (21:88)

God Almighty accepted his supplication and he was given new life, as the fish threw him out of her belly.

God Almighty accepted following prayer of Hazrat Yusuf (as) (Joseph) and saved him from the evil design of the evil woman.

قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ  
وَأَلَّا تَصْرِفَ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُنَّ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

He said, 'O my Lord, I would prefer prison to that to which they invite me; and unless Thou turn away their guile from me I shall incline towards them and be of the ignorant.' (12:34)

Similarly, God Almighty accepted the following prayer of his servant, Hazrat Ayyub (as) (Job), and miraculously cured him of disease:

وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ  
الضُّرُّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ

And remember Job when he cried to his Lord, saying, 'Affliction has touched me, and Thou art the Most Merciful of all who show mercy.(21:84)

The Holy Qur'an mentions several prayers of Hazrat Moses (as), which were accepted by God Almighty, including the following prayer:

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ تُضِلُّ بِهَا مَنْ تَشَاءُ  
وَتَهْدِي مَنْ تَشَاءُ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا  
وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْغَافِرِينَ

Wilt Thou destroy us for that which the foolish among us have done? This is nothing but a trial from Thee. Thou causest to perish thereby whom Thou pleasest and Thou guidest whom Thou pleasest. Thou art our Protector; forgive us then and have mercy on us, for Thou art the Best of those who forgive (7:156)

Regarding the Holy Prophet(sa) of Islam, God Almighty has stated in the Holy Qur'an:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

And We have sent thee not but as a mercy for all peoples (21:108)

God Almighty Himself taught the Holy Prophet (sa) many prayers which are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Some of the prayers God Almighty taught the Holy Prophet (sa) are as follows :

#### Prayer for the increase in knowledge:

فَتَعَلَى اللَّهِ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ  
أَنْ يُقْضَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

Exalted then is Allah, the True King! And be not impatient for the Qur'an ere its revelation is completed unto thee, but only say, 'O my Lord, increase me in knowledge.(20:115)

#### Prayer for mercy and forgiveness:

وَقُلْ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّحِيمِينَ

And say, 'My Lord, forgive and have mercy, and Thou art the Best of those who show mercy.(23:119)

#### Prayer for having a righteous wife and children:

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا  
وَذُرِّيَّتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا

And those who say, 'Our Lord, grant us of our wives and children the delight of our eyes, and make us a model for the righteous (25:75)

#### Prayer for mercy upon one's parents:

وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ  
وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْنِي صَغِيرًا

"And lower to them the wing of humility out of tenderness. And say, 'My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me in my childhood.'(17:25)"

#### Prayer for good beginning and good ending:

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي  
مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَاجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَصِيرًا

And say, 'O my Lord, make my entry a good entry and then make me come forth with a good forthcoming. And grant me from Thyself a helping power. (17:81)

# Etiquette of Prayer

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah (as)

Prayer is a wonderful thing. It is a pity that those who pray are not aware of the true manner of prayer, nor are they acquainted with the ways of the acceptance of prayer. The truth is that the very reality of prayer has become strange. There are some who deny the effectiveness of prayer altogether. There are others who do not deny it, but as their prayers are not accepted on account of their lack of knowledge of the manner of prayer and are not prayers in the true sense, their condition is worse than that of those who deny the effectiveness of prayer. Their practical condition has pushed many others to the verge of atheism.

The first condition for prayer is that a supplicant should not get tired and become a prey to despair that nothing will happen. Sometimes it is seen that a prayer is carried on till it is about to be accepted and then the supplicant gets tired and the result is failure and frustration. Frustration results in the denial and effectiveness of prayer and gradually culminates in the denial of God. It is said if there is God Who accepts prayer why have not those prayers been accepted which were offered over a long period? If those who think thus and stumble were to reflect upon their lack of perseverance, they would come to know that all their frustration is the result of their own haste and impatience which generated an ill concept of the powers of God and resulted in despair. So one should never get tired.

## Be Sincere and Determined

Praying is like the sowing of a seed by a farmer. Apparently he buries the good seed in the soil and who can expect at that time that the grain of seed will grow up in the form of a good tree and bear fruit? Outsiders and even the cultivator himself cannot see that the grain is assuming the form of a plant inside the earth. But the reality is that within a few days the grain undergoes a change and begins to assume the shape of a plant till its shoot emerges from the earth and becomes visible to everyone. From the moment when the grain was placed in the earth it had started its preparation to become a plant, but an eye that can only perceive the visible was not aware of it till its shoot emerged from the earth and became visible. An ignorant child cannot understand at that stage that it will bear fruit only at its due time. He desires to see it bearing fruit immediately, but an intelligent cultivator will know what the time of its bearing fruit is. He looks after it steadfastly and nurtures it till the time comes when it bears fruit and which also ripens.



The same is the case with prayer, which is nurtured in the same way and brings forth fruit. Those who are in haste get tired quickly and give up and those who are steadfast persevere and arrive at their objective. It is true that there are many stages in prayer, ignorance of which deprives the supplicants of the fruits of their prayers. They are in a hurry and cannot wait, whereas there is progression in the works of the Almighty. It never happens that a man marries today and a child is born to him next morning. Though God is All-Powerful and can do whatever He wills, yet compliance with the law and the system that He has appointed is necessary. In the first stages of childbearing nothing is known, like the nurture of vegetation. For four months there is no certainty. Then a movement begins to be felt and after the expiry of the full period the child is born after great travail. The birth of the child is also gives a new life to the mother. It is difficult for a man to form a concept of the troubles and travails which a woman has to endure during her pregnancy, but it is true that the coming of a child is a new life for the mother. She has to accept death so as to have the joy of bearing a child. In the same way, it is necessary for a supplicant that he should discard haste and endure all troubles and should never imagine that prayer is not accepted. At last the time arrives for the result of the prayer to be manifested; the child which is the objective is born.



A prayer should be carried on to the limit until it produces a result. You will have observed that a piece of cloth is placed under a burning glass and the rays of the sun concentrate upon it and their heat arrives at the degree which sets the cloth on fire. In the same way, it is necessary that a prayer should be carried on to a stage where it should develop the power of burning up failures and frustrations and to fulfill the desired purpose.

One has to be occupied with prayer for a long time and then God Almighty manifests the result. It is my experience, which is borne out by the experience of the righteous in the past, that if there is silence for a long time, there is hope of success, but if there is a quick reply the purpose is not likely to be achieved. When a beggar goes to someone and begs with humility and earnestness and does not move from his place, even after he is rebuked, and continues his supplication, then in the end the person supplicated is moved and bestows something on the beggar despite his miserliness. Then should not a supplicant have at least so much steadfastness as an ordinary beggar? When God Almighty Who is Benevolent and possesses Majesty sees that His humble servant has been prostrate at His threshold for a long time, He does not lead him to a bad end. If a pregnant woman should become impatient after four or five months and should take some abortive medicine, the child would not be born, but she herself would be involved in despair. In the same way, he who is in a hurry before the due time only suffers loss and puts his faith in danger. In this condition some people become atheists. There was a carpenter in our village whose wife fell ill and then died. He said that if there had been a God, his multiple prayers would have been accepted and his wife would not have died. In this way he became an atheist.

If a righteous person practices fidelity and sincerity, his faith is fostered and he achieves his purpose. The riches of this world have no value in the estimation of God Almighty. He can do everything in a single moment. Have you not seen that He bestowed sovereignty on a people who were entirely unknown and made great kingdoms obedient to them and made kings out of slaves? If a person is righteous and becomes wholly God's, he would lead an excellent life, but the condition is that he should be sincere and possess resolve. His heart should never be shaken and there should be no showing off and shirk in it. What was there in Abraham which made him the father of his people and the father of those who are devoted to God, and God Almighty bestowed numberless great blessings on him? It was his righteousness and his sincerity. Abraham had offered a prayer that a Prophet should appear in Arabia from among his progeny. Was it accepted at once? For a long time after Abraham no one paid any attention to that prayer, yet it was fulfilled in the advent of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and how grand was its fulfillment.

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[Al-Hakm, vol. 7, Number. 8, 28 February 1903, pp. 1-3]



# Prayer in Hinduism

Rabia Salim

When I reflect on my understanding of prayer in Hindu religion, the first thing that comes to mind is the religious origins of yoga. Having taken a yoga class in high school and a Hindu religion course in university, the rituals I encountered had ties to religion, adapted for spiritualism in the present day. The spiritual benefits of yoga cannot be denied. The aim of yoga is likened to prayer because the practice brings about clarity, self-realization, and liberation.<sup>(1)</sup> The practice of yoga and its relation to the sun connects it to the Hindu religious realm, but its origins can be traced to before the revelation of the Vedas. Also, roots of this form of prayer appear in many continents, but in India, it took on its full form as a religious practice.<sup>(2)</sup> My other brush of knowledge was from films based on popular culture; I had a vague idea that dance is a form of worship in Hinduism, as are many other rituals. My knowledge was basic at most, however on further reflection, I realized that there are stark similarities between all religions regarding the aims of the acts of worship which I will delve into here.

A mantra is a form of prayer in Hinduism that at times is chanted out loud or kept secret by the worshipper. It is present in many different prayer ceremonies and takes on different forms according to the ceremony. The repetitive nature can be likened to Islamic prayers that invoke blessings onto the Prophet Muhammad (sa), or chanting by Gregorian monks. We will come back to the idea of 'invoking' something later on when I go into detail about the aims of Hindu prayer.<sup>(3)</sup>



Yajna is one of the elements of Hindu worship. It can occasionally be offered or five times daily like the Muslim worship which is offered five times daily. It needs to be performed by a priest to follow the specific procedure, and at home, three domestic fires need to be maintained for various sacrifices. The complete way to perform it is found in the Vedas, which is the revelation given to Hindus, similar to the Bible for Christians and Quran for Muslims. Specifically, Muslims are given directives in the Quran on when to pray. In the Vedas, there are around 400 yajnas mentioned, all of which are not performed in the present day. The need for a priest does not apply to daily sacrifices offered at home by higher caste Hindus.<sup>(3)</sup>

Puja is a simpler ceremony that may be performed by anyone except for certain exceptions, unlike the elaborate sacrificial ceremonies. Even today it is practiced in many Hindu households in various forms. In the ceremony, Hindus offer flowers and water to the deity, as well as reciting the names of God. There is a spiritual dimension of puja that follows from these prayers where the inward spirit of the worshipper is supposed to be awakened, and the devotee believes it makes the deity come to life too. The practice revolves around offering sacrifices and paying respects and is supposed to be the way a host honors a guest in their home. The ceremony includes recitation of sacred verses, incense, food offerings, hymns, and prayers. Following this initial rapport building with the deity,





the worshipper intensifies his supplications and carries on with prayers and supplications. The ceremony typically ends with the offering of a sacred flame and distribution of the remains of the offerings.(3)

Now I wish to turn to the theme of “awakening” or “invoking” which I have come across a lot as I learned about the Hindu faith. In Hindu worship, we see statues, which is the outward element of worship, as well as importance is given to the inward spirit of a worshipper. The connection these statues have with God in this world and the next. This element is important in all religions, including Islam. That is why Yajna and Puja can be performed inwardly, and in Islam, this concept is important too. For example, in Islam, one inward prayer is invoking blessings on the Prophet Muhammad (sa) known as “Durood.” These invocations show devotion, sincerity, and attract the Grace of God on the worshipper. This concept relates to the spiritual realm and how a person can internally purify themselves to achieve communion with God. The outward and inward nature of Hinduism is a concept in many religions, however in Islam, it is characterized through recitation or movement in prayers for outward, but there are no statues present. In Christianity, the concept of God is also a higher being, with no statues, and Jesus is not like Krishna. Revelation comes from God, and Jesus is a being spiritually connected to God as the son of God, but in Hinduism it is believed that God manifests Himself as a human.(5) Orthodox Judaism has many outward expressions in appearance. For example the tzitzit for men, which reminds them of Gods commandments. Sikh men have a head covering, the turban. Interestingly, even though the outward rituals are different for each religion, the inward aims of prayer appear to be closely similar.

In more detail, intense love for God is a part of the Bakhti movement of Hinduism which is a human expression that is not easy to attain, perhaps one of the most sublime.(4) A theme running through Bakhti is liberation from worldly desires and finding this path. Lord Krishna is the highest god, would lead to one God, and this is interesting because there

seem to be many deities to worship. However, these are supposed to provide a worldly image to worshippers to help them to advance to the Highest God only. Bakhti, like other forms of prayer, comprises many types of worship, for example singing, chanting, remembrance of the Lord and deity worship. Bakhti being a sublime expression of human devotion links it to a state of inner peace that similarly is the goal of Islam.(3) Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (as), describes the final stage of spiritual development of the soul to be “the soul at peace,” in Arabic this is “Nafse Mutmainah.” This is also the liberation of the soul from worldly troubles and a union with God.

There are some concepts in Hinduism that need to be highlighted here, including reincarnation. The main belief is that you come back to earth as a different being. Therefore, the idea of punishment and reward is unlike heaven and hell. If you are a good person, the reward for this is coming back to earthly life again, which appears as a paradox to many. However, it is not a certainty you will return as a human, if your religious and moral conduct is not up to par, you will come back as a monkey or worse as a lower animal form. Hindus believe in karma which is the consequences of your negative actions, and the earth is seen as a place of punishment and reward. The prayers get you in touch with your inner self, and your relationship with God strengthens. The spirit or soul is in another realm with the Lord, but in this world, the matter is in a constant chain and development state.(5) This is in contrast to the concept of the afterlife being the ultimate reflection of your worldly life after you live one life and die. The Holy Quran tells us “Behold how We have exalted some of them over others in the present life, and surely the Hereafter shall be greater in degrees of rank and greater in excellence.”(6)





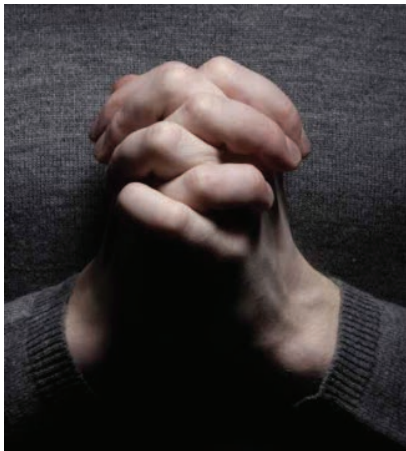
It would also be useful to point out a fundamental difference between Islam and Hinduism because it is a major part of Hindu worship and this is the use of statues which are forbidden in Islamic worship. It is also important to discuss the names of certain gods that Hindus offer their sacrifices to. The Holy book the Vedas is supposed to invoke the various gods and prayers highlight the virtues of the various gods and seek favor for them. An example of one god is Shiva who symbolizes life and death, existence and non-existence and who also destroys ignorance and negative emotions. His appearance is quite humanlike. He has a wife and two children. He is the master of all dance forms and employs dance to relieve worldly sufferings and to alleviate the pain of the followers, all forms of dance being a form of expression and all with different names. His appearance also carries symbolism, his hair symbolizing power and spirituality, the snakes representing control over desire and sensuality, and so forth. Each god represents quality and is a way to reach the Ultimate One and Only Creator, the Highest God. Other names of gods are Brahma the creator, and Vishnu, the preserver for example.(3) Krishna is God. However, he came to earth in human form and performed Prophet like deeds and led a life as an exemplary human distinguishing good from evil like many prophets in all the religions.(5)

A study of prayer in Hinduism has given me a greater appreciation of the roots and branches of the Hindu faith and the unity between us all and our Creator.



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# A Prayer of Jesus

Syed Sajid Ahmad

Every year Muslims all over the world celebrate the end of Ramadan and memorialize the sacrifice of Abraham by celebrating the pilgrimage to Mecca about two months later. These two celebrations are known among Muslims variously as Eid or 'Id, an Arabic word for a day that returns. As these two festivals return every year, they are known as Eids.

The word Eid occurs only once in the Holy Quran. It occurs not in relation to the celebration of these two festivals but in context of a prayer of Jesus that is related in chapter 5, verses 113-116

"When the disciples said, 'O Jesus, son of Mary, is thy Lord able to send down to us a table spread with food from heaven?' he said, 'Fear Allah, if you are believers.'

They said, 'We desire that we may eat of it, and that our hearts be at rest and that we may know that thou hast spoken truth to us, and that we may be witnesses thereto.'

Said Jesus, son of Mary, 'O Allah, our Lord, send down to us a table from heaven spread with food that it may be to us a festival (Eid), to the first of us and to the last of us, and a Sign from Thee; and provide sustenance for us, for Thou art the Best of sustainers.'

Allah said, 'Surely, I will send it down to you, but whosoever of you disbelieves afterwards—I will surely punish them with a punishment wherewith I will not punish any other of the peoples.'"

It is evident from these verses that Jesus, may peace be upon him, prayed and God responded to his prayer and promised him that during the earlier days of Christianity and during the latter days, his people will be bestowed food bountifully making it a festival worth celebration. Followers of Jesus enjoyed this bounty during the time of its free spread during its earlier period and then now in latter days.

When we visit a local grocery store in the West, we see fruits and vegetables from all over the world beautifully displayed in large quantities reminding this verse of the Holy Quran how a prayer offered two thousand years ago is being fulfilled in our times. The fulfillment of the prophecy required that the western nations invent ways to improve the quality of crops and their yield to make them available plentifully, that they invent



ways to store them like fresh over long periods so that they can be able to transport them fresh from far off places. Then it was necessary that transportation methods and vehicles are invented that could haul large quantities quickly to all parts of the world. Knowledge in agriculture had to be advanced to produce varieties that can withstand rigors of weather, environment and disease attacks. It is amazing how many inventions came together to fulfill this prayer that could not be easily imagined two thousand years ago except for a promise given to Jesus by his Master.

The Holy Quran mentioned this prayer and its acceptance when the second period of its fulfillment was still to come hundreds of years in advance. Seeing this manifest fulfillment of a prayer before our eyes, can we still be doubtful of the acceptance of prayers?

The fulfillment of this prayer shows us the need for continuous human effort to bring means together for the acceptance of a prayer. The human effort necessary to fulfill a prayer or a prophecy sometimes takes place under our own cognizance and we make all possible efforts for the fulfillment of a prayer. Sometimes the efforts necessary to fulfill a prayer or prophecy are forced upon us under the current of heavenly winds blowing towards the destined end.



# Buddhism: My prayer experience

Fazal Masood Malik



On a warm Sunday afternoon, warm enough to be lazy, I sat in a somewhat awkward lotus position with Venerable Lee, a respected elder at a Buddhist Monastery on east coast of Prince Edward Island. We faced the Northumberland Strait and the warm sea breeze, touched with a hint of salt greeted us as we embarked on a journey to pray together. A Muslim and a Buddhist.

The act of praying is as old as thought itself, perhaps older. From the first recorded prayer of Adam (as), the reliance of humans on prayers has evolved, as has its meaning. Whether a person believes in God or not, prayer appears to be a force among us, acknowledging a reality greater than the abilities of self. In Islam, a person prays to Allah the Gracious, in Buddhism, the concept varies.

There are three main Buddhist traditions in the world today: Theravada, Mahayana, and Tibetan. Theravada is a Pali (1) word meaning 'Doctrine of the Elders (2)' and they regard only the Pali Cannon (3) as the most authoritative spiritual teaching (4). Mahayana is a Sanskrit word meaning 'Great Vessel.' It originated around the same time as Christianity and recognizes many texts and teachings as authentic (5). Theravada is dominant in most of South and Southeast Asia while Mahayana is dominant in the East and Central Asia. Tibetan tradition is a combination of Theravada and Mahayana traditions and the primary contributor towards the spread of Buddhism in the West (6).

The view on concept and philosophy of prayer is different in each school. Theravada Buddhists tend to pray, but not with the expectation that anyone is listening. Mahayana Buddhists pray to buddhas and bodhisattvas. Whether those figures are humans, gods or literal beings, is the subject of much discussion.

Earlier in the day when we met, Venerable Lee told me that the Buddhist prayer is a practice to awaken our inherent inner capacities of strength, compassion, and wisdom. It is not to supplicate external forces based on fear or desire for worldly or heavenly gains. "It is a form of meditation, a practice of inner reconditioning" he assured me. From our discussions I gathered that the Buddhist prayer is used to calm the mind, replacing the negative energy with positive, while focusing on the blessings. Venerable Lee continued "Prayer guides our hearts towards compassion for others and ourselves. It allows us to turn our hearts and minds towards what is beneficial for the greater wisdom."

The theistic form of Buddhism, mostly Theravada, encourages its followers to pray for special blessings such as healing of illness, either their own or that of others. Such prayers may be directed at a greater force or take the form of meditation in which the person praying becomes the means of healing illness. It is not uncommon for a Buddhist to request special prayers by the clergy; however, the stress in all traditions is on meditation, as that is the key to self-transformation and personal healing.

As we settled in our places, with me attempting to form a lotus position, the sun warmed the inner reaches of my being and quietness settled all around us. As the tranquility grew, I heard the voice of my prayer companion gently guiding me to suppress my thoughts. As a Muslim, we are taught to focus on the meaning of the prayers we recite, to ponder upon their significance, to contemplate their meaning; and often to self-reflect when reciting certain prayers, especially those that encompass our loved ones. There is never a moment in our prayers where 'nothingness' comes into play. As a consequence, I wasn't sure how to approach this prayer session.

"Let your mind settle naturally and recite the prayers from there." Meditation is all about not-thinking, letting the mind settle so deeply that it does not do anything. My only thought at that point was: "That is where we are meant to pray from?" I wasn't sure what to make of that. The idea is to let body, breath, and mind settle naturally. Though it sounds simple, it is not easy. At first, you feel like you are doing nothing, and it takes a while to appreciate that that is exactly what you are doing. It is amazing what your mind can recall when allowed to settle. My mind started recalling events from days gone by; for example, I remembered,



vividly, my visit to an aunt who passed away perhaps four decades ago, and the 'journey' back to the store to get milk when I forgot to purchase it on my way home on an extremely cold night. Sensing my discomfort, he gently guided me to "let it all go." After much rebellion from the productive part of my brain, it all seemed to eventually quieten down. Calmness started rising from inside as the warmth of the sun settled on the outside. After the noise had subsided, I found myself resting deeply. Unsure if I was in a deep meditative state or sleeping, I felt a sense of clarity grow exponentially as the hands of time moved forward.

At some point during my state of meditation, from the depth of my soul grew a voice so loud and convincing that it was impossible to ignore. It was as if a thousand birds had started singing concurrently at the break of dawn and all in sync recited a prayer so close to my heart: 'My Lord, I am in need of whatever good Thou mayest send down to me.' An utter bliss!

Unaware of how much time had passed since our meditation session began and unable to feel any sensation in my legs, I remained immersed in the blissfulness of the prayer, and decided not to silence my mind. The recitation of this small yet profound prayer continued from somewhere deep inside me, while the tears gravitated towards the earth I sat upon. It was a pleasant and surprising discovery for me, as I discussed with Venerable Lee after the meditation; perhaps an important one. Sometimes in the drudge of our daily routine, we do not stop to appreciate the depth and wisdom found in the Islamic prayers. That day, the Buddhist meditation session became a gateway for understanding my prayers in a new light.

When you consider that current day Buddhism is a theistic and a non-theistic religion (7), the issue of prayer becomes complex. Prayer is to Islam what Meditation is to Buddhism, however, adding further complexity to the equation is the fact that many Buddhists practice traditions such as recital of texts and mantras, as well as offer aspirational and petitional prayers (8).

Curious about the origin of prayers and teachings of Hazrat Buddha (as), I turned to the books of history. Hazrat Buddha (as) appeared around 566 BCE. For the first five centuries, the traditions were transmitted orally, with the first written scriptures appearing in Pali around the time of Christianity (9). Although over the long period of five hundred years, much was lost, I found many prayers recorded by different traditions that resonated with me. I list a few for the consideration of the reader (13):

Before the start of Meditation session, a person seeking the faith is recommended to settle in solitude and recall the

virtues of the Buddha in these words:

'This Lord is truly the Arahāt, fully enlightened, perfect in his knowledge and conduct, well-gone, world-knower, supreme, leader of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and men, the Buddha, the Lord.'

What resonated the most was the theme, which is clearly recognizable as the first part of the Surah Fatiha, the key chapter of the Holy Qur'an (Chapter 1).

As I continued down the book of meditation, I found a prayer that stands out as a tone for the ten conditions of bai'at (Pledge of initiation). Listed simply as a prayer to Surrender of Self, the prayer reads follows:

Heedless of body, heedless of goods, of the merit I gained and will gain still, I surrender my all to promote the welfare of others.

I drove home that evening, with the sun just settling over the horizon, pondering over the different yet similar thoughts between Islam and Buddhism. I recalled with joy the teachings of my master (10) that "... the pride and elegance of Islam is that it advocates prayers ... because (in prayers) exists the indisputable proof of God (11)." Knowing that Hazrat Buddha (as) was a messenger of Allah (12), a reformer of his times, I reflected upon his life and in a moment of awakening understood the simple message of Buddhism: life means aspiring to let go of everything and breathe in unity with the Universe.

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# Why Pray?

Khalida Jamilah

In his discourse on prayer in 'An Elementary Study of Islam,' Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) quotes from chapter 29, verse 46 of the Holy Qur'an:

"Verily, Prayer prevents the worshipper from indulging in anything that is undignified or indecent."

He then goes on to explain the verse as follows: "This verse has both positive and negative connotations, both highly essential for creating ideal human conduct. Thus in its negative connotation, it helps the worshipper by liberating him from sins of all types. In its positive connotation it educates man, refines his character and cultivates his qualities to such sublimity as to make him worthy of communion with God." (1)

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, to pray is "to make a request in a humble manner; to address God or a god with adoration, confession, supplication, or thanksgiving." (2) The first part of this definition means the person put himself subordinate to a higher being. Why the emphasis on humble manner? The worldwide head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) explained in a Friday Sermon that on one occasion while outlining the philosophy of prayer, the Promised Messiah (as) said that when a child cries and wails due to hunger, the milk floods into the mother's breast. The child doesn't even know the meaning of prayer, and yet its cries draw the milk. Similarly, when a person prays, it is like a baby who cries for milk from his mother's breast. The breast milk is generated purely on account of the mother's natural instinct when she hears the innocent cry of the hungry baby. Thus when a person supplicates sincerely and with humility, even cries, he is yearning for help from the Creator, just as the helpless baby is crying for breast milk. (3)

In Islam, prayer is one of the foremost pillars of faith. The Holy Qur'an states: "Recite that which has been revealed to thee of the Book and observe Prayer. Surely, Prayer restrains one from indecency and manifest evil, and remembrance of Allah indeed is the greatest virtue. And Allah knows what you do." (4) This verse contains three key commandments, that is, preaching and reading of the Qur'an, observance of Prayer and the remembrance of Allah. The purpose of all three is to help deliver man from the bondage of sin and to help him to rise morally and spiritually which is the supreme



objective of all Divine Books. (4)

Islam teaches that prayer is the most direct way to communicate our needs to the Creator because, in Islam, God is a living God. Islam lays down conditions for that state when the heart is filled with awe of God and the very soul of the person offering the prayer is drawn to God in complete submission and utter humility. When a person attains this state, he may be assured that the door to acceptance of prayer is opened.

Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) states that another area which is highly important in this regard is the role that worship plays in developing one's soul. According to Islam, each human soul's connection to the carnal human body can be likened unto a child in the uterus of the mother. To give birth to a healthy child requires so many influences that are constantly transferred from the mother to the embryo and the child at a later stage. If the mother's influences on the embryo are unhealthy, the child is born as congenitally ill; if they are healthy then the child is born enjoying perfect health. Of all the influences that work towards the making and modification of the human soul, prayer is the most important single factor. (5)

Furthermore, from a health standpoint, prayer is the most widespread alternative therapy in America today. Over 85 percent of people confronting a major illness pray, according to a University of Rochester study. That is far higher than taking herbs or pursuing other non-traditional healing

methods and increasingly, the evidence is that prayer works. (6)

It does not matter if you pray for yourself or for others, pray to heal an illness, or for peace in the world, or simply sit in silence and quiet the mind — the effects appear to be the same. A wide variety of spiritual practices have been shown to help alleviate stress levels, which is one of the major risk factors for disease. There are also powerful ways to maintain a positive outlook and successfully weather the trials which come to all of us in life.

Over the past four decades, the relationship between prayer and health has been the subject of double-blind studies. Dr. Herbert Benson, a cardiovascular specialist at Harvard Medical School and a pioneer in the field of mind / body medicine, discovered what he calls "the relaxation response," which occurs during periods of prayer and meditation. At such times, the body's metabolism decreases, the heart rate slows, blood pressure goes down, and our breath becomes calmer and more regular. (7)

This physiological state is correlated with slower brain waves, and feelings of control, tranquil alertness and peace of mind. This is significant because Benson estimates that over half of all doctor visits in the U.S. today are prompted by illnesses like depression, high blood pressure, ulcers and migraine headaches, that are caused at least in part by elevated levels of stress and anxiety. (8)

Dr. Andrew Newberg, director of the Center for Spirituality and the Mind at the University of Pennsylvania, conducted a study of Tibetan Buddhists in meditation and Franciscan nuns in prayer which showed comparable decreased activity in the parts of the brain that are associated with sense of self and spatial orientation in both groups. He also found that prayer and meditation increase levels of dopamine,

which is associated with states of well-being and joy. (9)

The effects of spiritual practice appear to be more than just the result of enhanced focus and concentration. Ken Pargament, of Bowling Green State University, instructed one group of people who suffer migraines to meditate 20 minutes each day repeating a spiritual affirmation, such as "God is good. God is peace. God is love." The other group used a non-spiritual mantra: "Grass is green. Sand is soft." The spiritual meditators had fewer headaches and more tolerance of pain than those who had focused on the neutral phrases. (10)

In one National Institute of Health-funded study, individuals who prayed daily were shown to be 40 percent less likely to have high blood pressure than those without a regular prayer practice. Research at Dartmouth Medical School found that patients with strong religious beliefs who underwent elective heart surgery were three times more likely to recover than those who were less religious. A 2011 study of inner city youth with asthma by researchers at the University of Cincinnati indicates that those who practiced prayer and meditation experienced fewer and less severe symptoms than those who had not. (11)

What science can tell us is that people who pray and meditate tend to be statistically more healthy and live longer than those who do not. Whether these boons are merely unintended side effects of still deeper spiritual benefits remains a matter of faith.

Research published in the journal 'American Sociological Review' found that religious people are more satisfied with their lives because of the strong social networks formed among people of faith. Little wonder, then, that people who follow a spiritual path report higher levels of happiness than those who don't. (12)

But prayer is not only beneficial to mind and soul. It does a body good, too. For many people, sitting in a quiet, meditative state—the very essence of prayer—causes blood pressure to decrease, stress hormone levels to fall, pulse rate to slow and immune systems to get a boost. This is according to numerous studies, including many conducted by Dr. Koenig as well as Herbert Benson, MD, at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, author of 'The Relaxation Response':

"The evidence of concrete health benefits is overwhelming," says Dr. Benson. Even better, these positive health effects can continue after the prayer time is over. Research from the University of Wisconsin–Madison has found that being in a meditative state can produce lasting positive changes in



Dr. Andrew Newberg  
Director of the Center for Spirituality and the Mind, University of Pennsylvania



how the brain and the immune system function. Just as physical exercise builds our muscles, spiritual practice seems to rewire our brains to make us more resilient in the face of both physical and mental difficulties. (13)

"Spiritual practices, such as prayer or meditation, give you the ability to buffer stress, not just when you're doing it, but in the rest of your life as well," says Christina Puchalski, MD, Professor of Medicine at George Washington University School of Medicine and executive director of the George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health. (14)

To sum up, Islam elucidates the deep philosophical meaning of prayer, and the act of prescribed prayer in Islam, especially in congregation, continues to prove its countless

physical and spiritual benefits. The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), describes beautifully what prayer can do for and to a person:

"The prayer which produces a sweetness and a zeal for more of worship and which strikes a communication with God and is offered in all humility brings about a change in the life of the man. And this change is instantaneously perceived by the one who prays like this. This change makes him realize that he is not what he was before." (15)

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## Jewish and Muslim Prayer Traditions

Tariq Sharif

While prayer is, unfortunately, becoming a lost art in many parts of the world, it is as essential to human nature as the quest for God Himself. It is therefore not surprising that prayer is a fundamental practice of all religions – and that includes Judaism and Islam. What may be surprising to readers is the many similarities that the two great world religions share regarding prayer traditions, e.g., the how, what, when, and why of prayer.

Before we begin our comparison, it is important to note our reference point. Since Islam is a younger religion, it is logical it would reference back to Judaism versus the other way around. Said another way, if you are a younger sister, you were probably compared with your older sister more than the other way around, because your older sister existed and was known before you came to be.

In the case of Islam, the question would be whether Islam accepts the same God, same Holy Book, and same Prophets as Judaism, and the answer, surprising to many, is yes. Islam believes there is Only One God and He is the Creator and Sustainer of the whole universe and every human being within it. Further, it is a requirement of faith that every Muslim believe in all revealed Books and all true Prophets including Prophet Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, and Moses (peace be on all of them).

It is important to understand that during the prayer, both Jews and Muslims, are praying to the same God, thus placing their deepest hopes, fears, and desires in the same Divine Being. While perhaps we know this intuitively, it is quite profound. For example, if I discover that you have the same very good friend and benefactor as I do, it immediately becomes a point of bonding and connection. So too, Jews and Muslims should recognize that the One they are orienting their lives towards every day is the same One!

### Commune with God

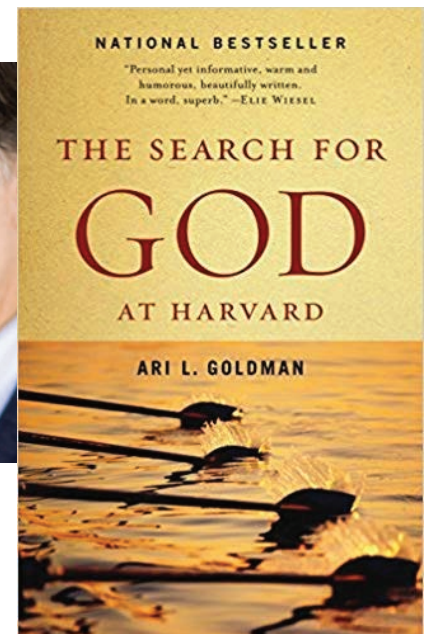
Now let us turn to the first and most important question; why do Jews and Muslims pray? While this is both a simple and profound question, it starts with understanding what the objective of God's creation of human beings in the first place. In the Torah, we read that mankind will be successful if they observe the command "to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul."<sup>(1)</sup> Therefore prayer is considered to be a Tefillah or service of one's heart in

submission to God. Similarly, the Quran states that man's purpose for being created is "to worship God Alone."<sup>(2)</sup>

Both the service that Judaism speaks of and the worship that Islam speaks of are two branches of the same tree. In both cases, the worshiper is attracted to the attributes of God, seeks to become closer to Him, and ultimately become imbued in His love. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, writes in his book Blessings of Prayer:

"Prayer, in essence, means a relationship of mutual attraction between a righteous person and his Lord. This means that God's grace first draws a person towards Himself, and then, through the magnetism of the person's sincerity, God draws closer to him. In the state of prayer, this relationship reaches a point where it manifests wonderful qualities."<sup>(3)</sup>

Ari Goldman, a Jew and the author of "The Search for God at Harvard," describes his prayer experience as follows: "I know it makes an impression on me. I feel fortified by prayer. I am in a relationship with God. I praise, I acknowledge, thank, request, express my love, and sometimes even get angry. My connection with the rest of the world – with my children, my wife, my students, my colleagues – flows out of my daily encounter with God."<sup>(4)</sup>



### Pray Every Day

When one considers the essential quality of prayer, it's importance in communing with God and then reflecting His attributes in one's human relationships; it is no wonder that Judaism and Islam both prescribe prayer multiple times each day. The offering of prayer multiple times a day is reflected in Ari's words above "daily encounter with God."

In general, Jewish men are obligated to conduct Tefillah (prayer) three times a day within specific time ranges. According to some Jewish legal authorities, women are only required to engage in Tefillah once a day, with others saying at least twice a day.

Traditionally, there are three daily prayer services:

- **Morning prayer: Shacharit or Shaharit**
- **Afternoon prayer: Mincha or Minha**
- **Additional prayer: Arvit ("of the evening") or Maariv ("bringing on night")**

The Talmud Bavli gives two reasons why there are three basic prayers: to recall the daily sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem, and because each of the Patriarchs instituted one prayer: Abraham the morning, Isaac the afternoon and Jacob the evening prayer.(5)

The Holy Book of Muslims, the Holy Qur'an, instructs them about daily prayers in these words:

"So glorify Allah (God) when you enter the evening and when you enter the morning, And to Him belongs all praise in the heavens and the earth, and glorify Him in the afternoon and when you enter upon the time of the decline of the sun."(6)

Five obligatory daily prayers are prescribed for Muslims:

- **Morning Prayer: Fajr** begins with dawn and ends just before sunrise.
- **Midday Prayer: Dhuhr** begins after the sun has crossed the zenith point and has begun to decline.
- **Late Afternoon Prayer: 'Asr** when the sun has further advanced in decline and reaches a point nearly half way between the beginning of decline and sunset.
- **Evening Prayer: Maghrib** begins immediately after the sun has set and lasts till dusk.
- **Night Prayer: Isha** begins when dusk has disappeared, giving way to the darkness of night.

As stated before, the shared practice between Judaism and Islam of daily prayers is losing favor among general society throughout the world. Today many Jews and Muslims might view multiple formal prayers per day as burdensome. However,



had a stream outside his door, and he bathed in it five times a day, do you think he would have any filth left on him?" The people also said, "No filth would remain on him whatsoever." The Prophet then said, "That is like the five daily prayers: Allah (God) wipes away the sins and purifies by them."(7)

Similarly, The Talmud Yerushalmi states that the Anshei Knesset HaGedola ("The Men of the Great Assembly") understood the benefit of regular daily prayer from the personal habits of their forefathers and the prophets Abraham (as), Isaac (as), and Jacob (as).(8)





## Pray in Congregation

Both Judaism and Islam also make a distinction between congregational prayer and individual prayer, emphasizing the special benefits of the former. In Judaism, individual prayer is considered acceptable, but prayer with a quorum of adults, a "minyan" is the most highly recommended form and is required for some prayers. The quorum required is ten mature adults (at least 12 or 13 years of age) and traditionally could only count men, although most congregations count women now as well.

In Islam, congregational prayer is also preferred and can be held with as little as two individuals. A Muslim is exhorted to try to go to a Mosque (Muslim place of worship), but congregational prayer can be performed at home or any clean place. According to the Holy Prophet (sa), congregational prayers rewards a believer 27 times more than a prayer offered alone. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) stated that "The rationale behind putting more reward in congregational prayers is that it creates unity." (9)

## Body and Soul

How do Jews and Muslims pray? In Judaism, the idea that body movement can express devotion to God appears in the Book of Psalms: "All my limbs shall say 'Who is like You, O Lord?'" (35:10) In Midrash Tehillim, an 11th-century exegetical text, the rabbis interpret "all my limbs" quite literally:

"With my head, I bend my head and bow down in prayer ... and I also wear tefillin (a small leather box containing Hebrew texts on vellum, worn as a reminder to keep the law) on my head. With my neck, I fulfill the precept of wrapping oneself in fringes (tzitzit). With my mouth, I praise You, as it says: 'My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord' (10). With my face, I prostrate myself, as it says: 'He fell down on his face to the earth' (11) With my nose, I smell spices with it (during the Havdalah blessing) at the outgoing of Shabbat. With my ears, I listen to the singing of the Torah." (12)

The motion plays a critical role in Islamic prayer through a set of prescribed physical movements that make up raka'ats as well. These motions include standing, bending, kneeling, bowing, and prostrating. A specific prayers accompany each of these movements. For example, while in prostration, the most humble and submissive position, a Muslim prays: "Holy is my Lord, the Most High."

Both faiths have established a unifying set of prayers in an original language: Jews pray in Hebrew and Aramaic, Muslims in Arabic. However, both religions strongly encourage worshippers to make additional prayers in one's native tongue. According to halakha (the collective body of Jewish religious laws derived from the Written and Oral Torah), all individual prayers and virtually all communal prayers may be said in any language

that the person praying understands. In Islam, after saying the prescribed prayers, a person can pray as much as they like in their language and are encouraged to do so.

This combination of learning and saying revealed prayers in their original language together with the empowerment to pray for anything of one's desire in their language is a beautiful and inspiring aspect of one's desire to commune with God. In fact, it is the personal prayers of prophets of God that have often been preserved by God Himself as powerful and effective words that worshippers can use today.

We end with some beautiful examples from Judaism and Islam that will hopefully inspire readers to discover and employ more of these prophet's prayers in their daily worship.

"But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared.

The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations. Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your loving kindness ..." (13)

"My Lord, make me observe Prayer, and my children too. Our Lord! Bestow Thy grace on me and accept my prayer. Our Lord, grant forgiveness to me and my parents and to the believers on the day when the reckoning will take place." (14)

"O Allah, instill in our hearts a fear which becomes a barrier between us and disobedience towards You. Grant us such capacity of submission which enables us to enter Heaven. Bestow upon us such certainty of belief which eases the afflictions of this world. Enable us to benefit from our eyes, ears and other faculties as long as You keep us alive." (15)

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# Al-Fatiha: The Most Comprehensive Prayer

Dr. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal

Prayer, by definition, is “a solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God or an object of worship.” (1)

The concept of prayer exists in every faith in one form or another. In Islam, prayer has different forms. Obligatory prayer (Salat) is the second pillar of Islam, a ritual offered 5 times daily by every practicing Muslim. There are prayers befitting to different occasions prescribed in the Holy Qur’an, and by the Holy Prophet (sa) of Islam, as well as prayers prescribed by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), the Promised Messiah and Mahdi of this age.

The most comprehensive prayer prescribed in the Holy Qur’an appears in its opening chapter (surah) and it is recited from two to four times in every institutional obligatory as well as voluntary prayer. It is known as Surah Al-Fatiha.

Surah Al-Fatiha was revealed at Mecca, and from the very beginning, it formed part of the Muslim Prayer. This Surah (chapter) has been referred to in the Qur’anic verse, “We have indeed given thee the seven oft-repeated verses and the great Qur’an,” (2) which was revealed at Mecca. According to some reports, the Surah was also revealed a second time at Medina. The time of its first revelation may be placed very early in the Prophet’s ministry.

Although this Surah is known primarily as Al-Fatiha, it has been given a number of additional names, ten of which are as follows:

“Al-Fatihah-tal-Kitab, As-Salat, Al-Hamd, Ummul-Qur’an, Al-Qur’anul-Azim, As-Sab’ul-Mathani, Ummul-Kitab, Ash-Shifa’, Ar-Ruqyah, and Al-Kanz.” (3)

**Fatihatul-Kitab** (Opening Chapter of the Book) signifies that the Surah, having been placed in the beginning, serves as a key to the whole subject-matter of the Qur’an.

**As-Salat** (The Prayer) signifies that it forms a complete and perfect prayer and constitutes an integral part of the institutional Prayers of Islam.

**Al-Hamd** (The Praise) signifies that the Surah brings to light the lofty purpose of man’s creation and teaches that the relation of God to man is one of grace and mercy.



**Ummul-Qur’an** (Mother of the Qur’an) signifies that the Surah forms an epitome of the whole of the Qur’an, containing, in a nutshell, all the knowledge that has a bearing on man’s moral and spiritual development.

**Al-Qur’anul-Azim** (The Great Qur’an) signifies that although the Surah is known as Ummul-Kitab and Ummul-Qur’an, it nevertheless forms part of the Holy Book and is not separate from it, as mistakenly considered by some.

**As-Sab’ul-Mathani** (The Oft-repeated Seven Verses) signifies that the seven short verses of the Chapter virtually fulfill all spiritual needs of man. It also signifies that the Chapter must be repeated in every Rak’at of Prayer.

**Ummul-Kitab** (Mother of the Book) signifies that the prayer contained in the Chapter was the cause of the revelation of the Qur’anic Dispensation.

**As-Shifa** (The Cure) signifies that it provides a remedy for all the legitimate doubts and misgivings of man.

**Ar-Ruqyah** (The Charm) signifies that it is not only a prayer to ward off disease but also provides protection against Satan and his followers and strengthens the heart of man against them.

**Al-Kanz** (The Treasure) signifies that the Surah is an inexhaustible storehouse of knowledge.

Al-Fatiha Referred to in a Prophecy of the New Testament  
It is interesting to note that this very name occurs in a New Testament prophecy.

In Revelations 10: 1-2 it is written:

"I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven... and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth."(4) The Hebrew word for 'open' is *fatoah* which is the same as the Arabic word *Fatiha*.

Revelations 10: 3-4 says:

"And when he (the angel) had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices."

The seven thunders represent the seven verses of this chapter. Christian scholars admit that the prophecy refers to the second advent of Jesus Christ, and this has been established by concrete facts. (5)

The Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), who claimed to have fulfilled the prophecy relating to the second advent of Jesus, constantly had in his hands the little chapter, Al-Fatiha, and wrote several commentaries on it. He deduced arguments of his truth from its contents, and often referred to it in his speeches and writings and always used it as a model prayer, exhorting his disciples to do the same. He deduced from the seven short verses of this chapter the truths that were not known before. It was as if the chapter had been a sealed book until its treasures were discovered by Hazrat Ahmad (as). This, then, fulfilled the prophecy contained in Revelations 10:4:

"And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered and write them not." This prophecy referred to the fact that the *Fatoah* or *Al Fatiha* would, for a time, remain a

closed book, but that a time would come when it would become open."(6)

### Subject-Matter

According to the description of the subject matter of Surah Al-Fatiha by Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad, Khalifatul-Masih II (ra), as translated in the five-volume commentary of the Holy Qur'an, the chapter contains the essence of the entire Qur'anic teaching. It comprises all the subjects dealt with at length in the body of the Qur'an. The chapter starts with a description of the fundamental attributes of God, the pivot around which all the other divine attributes revolve, the basis of the working of the universe and of the relations between God and man.

The following attributes - Rabb (the Creator, Sustainer and Developer), Rahman (the Gracious), Rahim (the Merciful), and Maliki Yaum al-Din (Master of the Day of Judgment) - signify that after creating man, God endowed him with the best capacities and capabilities and provided the means and material needed for his physical, social, moral and spiritual development. Further, He made a provision that all labors and endeavors of man should be granted ample reward.

The chapter goes on to say that man has been created for *ibadat*, i.e., the worship of God and the attainment of His nearness, and that he constantly needs His help for the fulfillment of this supreme objective of his creation.

Then we have a comprehensive prayer in which all the urges of the human soul find full expression. The prayer teaches us that we should always seek and invoke the assistance of God that He may provide us with the means required for our success in this life and the life to come. And as man is apt to derive strength and encouragement from the good example of those noble and great souls who led successful lives in the past, he is taught to pray that just as those righteous and God-fearing men achieved the object of their life through God's help and assistance, and their labors were crowned with success, God should open for him as well the avenues of moral and spiritual progress.

Finally, the prayer contains a warning that after having been led to the right path, man sometimes strays away from it, loses sight of his goal and becomes estranged from his Creator. We are taught to remain always on our guard and constantly seek God's protection against any possible estrangement from Him.

This is the subject that is put in a nutshell in Al-Fatiha, and this is the subject with which the Qur'an deals fully and



comprehensively, citing numerous examples for the guidance of the reader. (3)

### Relation of Surah Al-Fatiha to the Rest of the Holy Qur'an

The chapter (Surah Al-Fatiha) not only forms the introduction to the Qur'an, it is an epitome of the whole Book. Thus, at the onset of any study, the reader knows in broad outline the subjects he should expect to find in the Qur'an. The Holy Prophet (sa) is reported to have said that the chapter Al-Fatiha is the most important of the chapters of the Qur'an. (8)

The Promised Messiah (as) has penned a wonderful exposition of Surah Al-Fatiha uncovering its hidden treasures of spiritual and temporal knowledge.

### Surah Al-Fatiha and the Rose

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) had a revelation in which Surah Al-Fatiha was compared to a rose. The rose has such external and internal beauties that make this flower of such excellent quality that human resources fall utterly short of reproducing it's like. He (as) relates that the excellence of Surah Al-Fatiha are in all respects similar to the wonders and excellence of the rose and that indeed they far exceed them.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) narrates the vision as follows,

" I beheld myself holding Surah Fatiha, which had an exceedingly lovely shape in my hand. The paper on which it was inscribed appeared as if it was loaded with countless red and delicate roses. Every time this humble servant of Allah recited a verse of the surah, a number of these roses rose into the air with a sweet cadence. These roses were very soft, big, bright, moist, fresh and sweet-smelling, filling the heart and head with fragrance as they soared, thus inducing a state of ineffable joyousness in mind altogether above and withdrawn from the world and all that it holds." (9)

The Promised Messiah (as) in the discourse on Surah Al-Fatiha states that,

"There are four grades of excellence which it is the duty of every believer to aspire after. One who has no part in them at all is devoid of faith. That is why Allah, the Lord of glory, has appointed for Muslims the prayer: Guide us along the straight path, the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy favors, so that they should keep supplicating for these four grades. In another place (4.70) the Holy Qur'an explains that the favored ones are the Prophets, the

righteous, the martyrs and the virtuous. The perfect man combines these excellences in his person." (10)

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) further explains that God has appointed from the beginning two parties of Muslims and the expression "the favored ones" in Surah Al-Fatiha points to them. These parties are:

1. The forerunners, that is the community of the Holy Prophet of Islam (sa); and
2. The latter party, that is, the community of the Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian.(11)

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) reminds us that Allah has directed us to supplicate the following in our five daily Prayer services:

"Lord, guide us along the way of Thy favored servants. They are the Prophets, the righteous, the martyrs and the virtuous. The purpose of this prayer is that you should repair to whichever of these groups you should find in your day and should seek to derive profit from their company."(12)

Surah Al-Fatiha comprises most comprehensively all that man needs to know concerning his origin and his end (life here and in the hereafter) and the purpose of his creation, that is, all the reasoning in support of the Existence of the Creator, and the need of Prophethood and Khilafat among His servants. Its chief import is that it furnishes tidings concerning the advent of the awaited Messiah and Mahdi.

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# Prayers for Healing

Shazia Sohail

Prophet Abraham (as) bears witness in the Holy Qur'an that, "And when I fall ill, it is He (Allah) Who restores me to health." (1)

Indeed, we find everyday instances of people receiving excellent medical care yet still not getting better, or people recovering after receiving minimal or even sub-standard care. Sometimes timeliness in the provision of medical help becomes a factor, and sometimes correct diagnosis is the key to a the cure. Doctors never guarantee a cure because there are always unknown, unusual, or unexpected factors that can derail the recovery process. The Holy Qur'an states that healing occurs only "by the command of Allah" (2) and enjoins believers to place their trust and reliance on Him alone when it comes to matters of health while utilizing the means for healing provided by Him. We find that the Holy Qur'an itself refers to honey as "a drink of varying hues. Therein is a cure for men. Surely, in that is a Sign for a people who reflect." (3) The admonition to 'reflect' is a clear indication that we are required to use our God-given intelligence to find means to cure various diseases.

In his sermon of December 19, 2008, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba), Khalifatul Masih the Fifth, drew the attention of Ahmadi doctors and physicians around the world to first and foremost remember this principle that God alone is The Healer, and along with treatment, they should pray for their patients in order to secure God's pleasure. This firm faith in God exhibited by Ahmadi doctors will grant them the ability to heal the sick, and their faith in God will increase, which in turn will cause them to increase in spirituality. On the other hand, people afflicted with illnesses should also not think that visiting a certain doctor or a certain hospital will become the cause of their cure, but it is only God's Grace and Mercy that will provide them complete health. Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) said that the letters he receives from around the world requesting prayers for their loved ones undergoing medical problems are a testimony to the fact that Ahmadis have firm faith in the healing power of prayers and rely solely on God for complete healing. Those who believe that cure comes from certain doctors are treading the boundaries of concealed Shirk. (4)

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) then narrated an incident from the life of Hazrat Nooruddin (ra), Khalifatul Masih the First, who was an expert physician relates: "My nephew died of diarrhea and my sister complained to me that had I been there the child would have survived. I told her that she would have another son who will die in front of me. Shortly after that she

became pregnant and gave birth to a beautiful boy. When he fell ill with diarrhea, she remembered what I had told her. She requested me to pray. I told her that Allah will grant her another son in his stead and that she should let this one go. Thus that child died, and she had another boy who is still alive and is working. Such is divine pride." A similar incident occurred with Dr. Mir Mohammad Ismail. His sister-in-law lost a daughter and complained she would have survived if Hazrat Nooruddin (ra) had been there. She said it so many times that he was compelled to say that she will have a boy who will die despite being treated by Hazrat Nooruddin (ra). That is exactly what transpired, causing his sister-in-law to realize that true healing comes only from God, and the doctor only plays the role of a medium of providing treatment, which can only be beneficial if God so wills, and that is the reason why prayers are required at every step of the way. (5)



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### Prayers for Healing in the Qur'an

We find the instance of Prophet Job (as) in the Holy Qur'an where "he cried unto his Lord, saying, 'Satan has afflicted me with toil and torment.'" (6) Allah responded "Strike and urge thy riding beast with thy foot. Here is cool water to wash with and a drink." (7) Here we are told that Prophet Job (as) suffered from a skin disease and was directed by God to bathe in a particular fountain of cool water.(8) This interpretation is borne out by the fact that the best relief for the pain of eczema is to cool it down with water.(9) According to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa), water is also the best remedy for fever.(10)

The Holy Quran refers to sin as a disease.(11) If one argues that even plants and animals get sick, even though they do not commit any sin, it is important to remember that while plants and animals do get sick, however, they do not have the capacity to heal themselves without human intervention. Also, mental illness and the capacity to cure it is exclusive to human beings. Thus, a great deal of responsibility comes with being human. Ill thoughts and actions can create a chain reaction and stresses that can lead to physical ailments within the body. Therefore, all the prayers in the Holy Qur'an that are recommended for protecting oneself against sinfulness are also deeply relevant to one's spiritual, mental, and physical health.

Prayers for Healing from the Traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa)(12)

1.Hazrat Ayesha (ra) narrates that whenever a family member fell ill, the Holy Prophet (sa) would read this prayer upon them: 'Remove the ailment, O Lord of mankind! Heal them, for You are the Healer. None other than You can grant recovery. Grant such recovery as would leave no disease behind.'(13)

2.Hazrat Abu Saeed Khudri (ra) narrates that the angel Gabriel

(ra) came to the Holy Prophet (sa) and inquired if he was sick. When the Holy Prophet (sa) replied "yes," angel Gabriel (ra) blew this prayer upon him: 'With the name of Allah I blow upon you and Allah will relieve you of every deadly disease. And will protect you from the evil of every soul and every eye that is jealous. Allah will grant you health. With the name of Allah, I blow upon you.(14)

3.Hazrat Ibn-e-Abbas (ra) narrates that the Holy Prophet (sa) would teach him this prayer for various aches and fever: 'With the name of Allah who is immensely Great. We seek refuge from the evil of every raging blood vessel, and come under the protection of Allah who is the most High, and also seek His refuge against the heat of the fire.(15)

4.When Hazrat Usman bin Abi al Aas (ra) complained of body aches to the Holy Prophet (sa), he taught him to recite 'Bismillah' three times that 'I pray with the name of Allah,' then recite the following seven times: 'I seek Almighty God, His dignity and His Power against every evil that I encounter and that I fear.'(16)

5.Hazrat Abu Darda (ra) narrates that a man came to the Holy Prophet (sa) and told him that his father had a stone in his bladder due to which he could not urinate. The Holy Prophet (sa) taught him this prayer: Our Lord is Allah who is in heavens. Your name is Holy, and Your will is exercised in the heavens and the earth. Just as your mercy is in the heavens, pray grant us mercy on earth too, and forgive our sins and transgressions. You are the Lord of the righteous. Thus, let healing descend with Your special healing power and treat this disease (affliction) with Your special mercy.(17)





6. Hazrat Usman Bin Hunaif (ra) narrates that a blind man came to the Holy Prophet (sa) and requested prayer for his sight to return. He replied, "If you want I can pray, or you can be patient. In my opinion that would be better for you." When the blind man insisted on prayer, the Holy Prophet instructed him to say this prayer after performing ablution in the best manner: O Allah! I beseech You, and in the name of Your Holy Prophet, I turn to You. And O Mohammad (sa), in your name I beg my Lord to fulfill this need of mine. O Allah, accept from Your beloved Prophet (sa) this plea and intercession on my behalf. (18)

7. Hazrat Anas (ra) relates that the Holy Prophet (sa) used to say this prayer: O Allah! I seek Your refuge against incapacity and laziness. And seek Your protection against cowardice, miserliness, old age, hard-heartedness, ignorance, poverty, disgrace, and helplessness. I also seek Your refuge from destitution, disbelief, disobedience, enmity, hypocrisy, fame, and ostentation. I seek Your protection against deafness, loss of speech, insanity, leprosy, albinism, and all terrible diseases. (19)

Upon being asked as to what were the best prayers to protect against deadly diseases that are hidden inside a human being, Hazrat Tahir Ahmad (rh) replied that whether a disease is

hidden or manifest, there is this prayer that works in all cases: "O my Lord, only You are the Bestower of healing; there is no healing other than Yours. Hence, cure our sick, heal them quickly and completely with such healing after which there is no trace of disease left." (20)

Additionally, Hazrat Tahir Ahmad (rh) advised to remember the prayer of Prophet Abraham (as) mentioned above that says "my Lord is so Gracious and Merciful that even though I get sick due to my own faults and mistakes, it is due to my God's intervention that I get better." (21)

The final prayer, which is general in nature and is also known as Ism-e-Azam (the prayer that must be accepted) recommended by him is, "O Lord, everything serves You. O Lord, protect me, help me and have mercy on me." (22) This prayer was taught to Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), the Promised Messiah, by God in a revelation, and He named it Ism-e-Azam; this prayer, therefore, has the ability to attract to itself Allah's blessings. Ism-e-Azam is that prayer which is weightier than all other prayers and averts hardship. (23)

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# Prayer and action

Amtul Kafi Yadullah Bhunnoo

"...I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me." (1)

If you believe in an Al-Mighty Creator who has power over all things, you would also believe that He listens to all your wishes. You call to your Creator seeking His help in anything you do, which is why Allah said above that the purpose of mankind is to worship Him. This calling to our Creator is called prayers. Muslims perform five daily prayers which is the obligatory form of worship. God has given us all the faculties required to carry out our daily activities including the actions of worship. The key word here is actions. Actions are an important part of the fulfilment of prayers, without actions it will be mere wishful thinking. Prayers require having trust in Allah, which includes believing in your own capabilities granted by Him. For example, some students undergoing exams say "I wish I would pass my exams" or "I wish I would get an A in physics". These prayers or wishes would be nullified without action, which is the act of studying for exams. Anas ibn Malik reported that a man said, "O Messenger of Allah, should I tie my camel and trust in Allah, or should I leave her untied and trust in Allah?" The Holy Prophet (sa), said, "Tie her and trust in Allah." (Tirmidhi) This again emphasises the point in taking actions and that for you to do what is in your power that is using your capabilities to carry out the action and trusting in the process that God will do whatever is for the best. This also tells us to keep a balance in everything in life, which is reflected in the Holy Quran in the following verses:

"And utter not thy prayer aloud, nor utter it too low, but seek a way between." (2)

"And those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly but moderate between the two..." (3)

These verses reflect that we must strike a balance in our spiritual and material being. To not be overly excessive. For this reason, some people may deem prayers as an unfruitful, useless act that reaps no benefit. Praying requires a profound belief in not just a God to whom you pray to but to a Creator who has bestowed all the faculties to its creation to live a fulfilling and progressive life. However, it is a misunderstanding and in fact also a lack of understanding of God that leads to people seeing no benefit in prayers when actions must be taken with them. Some people believe that believing in God

and performing prayers means that no action needs to be taken and that everything should reach the believer without having to move a limb. It is only God, the ultimate Creator of all things that can say "Be! And it is!" (4) But His Creation must do some work to get somewhere. We have to perform an action first to even make another human being, a process which takes nine months. This also means patience is also a key to having prayers answered.

This leads to the question, why is not everyone's prayer answered? It is not that it is the fault of Our Creator for not listening to our payer or that He does not hear it in the first place. But that the person praying should be patient. If a person is impatient for an answer, then it shows that they lack a perseverant attitude. Perseverance and patience do not develop overnight. These take times. It can be likened to one who wants to climb a mountain. Not everyone is able to reach the peak. Lao Tzu said: "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." The peak is not reached by the strongest in physical strength but by those with mental endurance. This has been shown by the youngest female mountaineer, Malavath Purna, who at the age of 13 reached the peak of Mount Everest. Someone described this achievement in the following words: "you are a courageous soul who summits the height of your full potential by realizing the depths of your spiritual capacity". (5)

We live in a fast-paced society where people want instant answers and gratification. People send a text message expecting quick reply without thinking about the person's situation. People treat prayers in the same way, if you are wondering why sometimes your prayers are not answered or why we don't get what we want or why we fail in life when we have prayed for everything. Again, this needs to be remembered that God does not always give us what we want, but He gives us what we need and at the right timing and would be of the greatest benefit. As he says in the Holy Quran:

"O ye who believe! seek help with patience and Prayer; surely, Allah is with the steadfast." (6)

Non-religious and some religious people too, reduce religion as nothing but a source for people to perform various forms of lip service to God in a house of worship. This is because some people as soon as they come out of a house of worship or have

finished a prayer, they go about moaning about the things they don't have or can't do blaming God for their misfortune. This is a negative act. Worshipping God does not mean that you only perform certain acts, singing songs, beating drums etc but engaging your heart in true worship by helping people, loving one another, taking care of the environment that God has given you to live. These are the true acts of worship that includes prayers. Prayers can be seen as a dialogue between the Creator and His Creation. However, the answer from the Creator who is All-powerful and encompassing is not limited to one form or another that we are aware of, which would be self-limiting. It comes in various ways. Ibn Mu'adh (ra) related that the Holy Prophet (sa) took hold of my hand and said, "O Mu'adh! By Allah I love you, so I advise you to never forget to recite after every prayer: "O Allah, help me remember You, to be grateful to You, and to worship You in an excellent manner." (Abu Dawud). Muslims have a specific united way of performing the five daily prayers that may vary in very minute details according to the school of thought you may follow but that we have all learnt through the Holy Prophet (sa), therefore this hadith when referring to worshipping Allah in an excellent manner means something more than the way the regular daily prayers of Muslims is performed. It means that every action that you take, Allah should be remembered that includes any word that will come out of your mouth or any step that you may take. Everything should reflect your belief in Allah and doing your best in everything and even in hard times, remembering that "Allah burdens not any soul beyond its capacity." (7)

Prayers also depend on intention. It is a way to guide our thoughts and minds into taking the correct path to accomplish a task. We are all a slave to something: money, cars and sexual desires. However with prayers we become slave to only God, our Creator and not to His creations and worldly-affairs. Hadhrat Ali (ra) said: "Verily, some people worship Allah being desirous of His reward – so this is the worship of traders; and some people worship Allah fearing His punishment – so it is the worship of slaves, and a group worships Allah in gratitude

to Him so this is the worship of the free." (Nahju 'l-balaghah) (8) To worship Allah without being compulsive that your prayers must be answered can only happen with the understanding and love for Him. Prayers also teach us to be grateful in life so that we develop a positive attitude that allows us to further progress. This is why the proper knowledge of God should be sought.

Prayers help us when we feel helpless, paralysed to take any action, it kindles our spirits, it helps to manifest miracles from God. This does not mean that we can ask God to rain gold coins on our small patch of land in a certain area, but that through the natural laws that Allah has created, we can reap benefits from it. Allah has created natural laws and principles so that we also learn to follow principles and do not break them. If one tends to be lenient in speaking the truth all the time, we cannot attribute lies to God. He is the Truth, thus principled as it says in the Holy Quran "Such is the law of Allah that has been in operation before; and thou shalt not find any change in the law of Allah." (9)

Promised Messiah (as) said that "Since man has to strive for progress, such prayer too is a kind of striving. It is quite obvious that when two objects are linked together, and we pick up one of them, the other also moves...In short, prayer is the elixir which turns a handful of dust into pure gold. It is water which washes away inner impurities. With such prayer the spirit melts and flows like water to fall prostrate on the threshold of the Holy One. It stands in the presence of God, bows down and prostrates before Him. The Salat taught by Islam is only its reflection. The standing of the spirit signifies that it shows readiness to suffer every hardship and to obey every command for the sake of God." (10) Prayer keeps one steadfast and focused since the Holy Quran says:

"Aye! it is in the remembrance of Allah that hearts can find comfort." (11)

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# Prayers of Women

Shehla Ahmad

Islam states that in the spiritual world, women are regarded equal to men and will be rewarded just like men. Islam also claims that women can also attain high spiritual status through their prayers, supplications and virtuous deeds with the grace of Allah.

The Holy Qur'an clearly mentions the spiritual rewards and blessings which women can achieve and states:

"Surely, men who submit themselves to God and women who submit themselves to Him, and believing men and believing women, and obedient men and obedient women, and truthful men and truthful women, and men steadfast in their faith and steadfast women, and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their chastity and women who guard their chastity and men who remember Allah much and women who remember Him – Allah has prepared for all of them forgiveness and a great reward" (1)

One of the signs and miracles linked with spiritual advancement is the acceptance of prayers. The Holy Qur'an has given the glad tidings about acceptance of prayers in the following words:

"Pray unto Me; I will answer your prayer" (2)

Almighty Allah mentions that acceptance of prayers is a blessing whose doors are open for both men and women and He listens to all who pray to Him. It states:

"So their Lord answered their prayers saying, I will not allow the work of any worker from among you, whether male or female, to be lost." (3)

There are many examples of such noble women mentioned in the Holy Qur'an whose prayers were accepted and answered.

One such example is of the mother of Mary (as), mother of Jesus (as).

"Remember when the woman of 'Imran said, 'My Lord, I have vowed to Thee what is in my womb to be dedicated to



Thy service. So do accept it of me; verily, Thou alone art All-Hearing, All-Knowing" (4)

This prayer is attributed to Mother of Mary, which she said before the birth of the child she was expecting. However, when the child was born, it turned out to be a female child. The woman of Imran was planning to dedicate the child to the service of faith, an act that was usually reserved for only boys. Despite the confusing nature of these events, she continued to pray, and God mentions this incident in the Holy Qur'an:

"But when she was delivered of it, she said, 'My Lord, I am delivered of a female' — and Allah knew best what she had brought forth and the male she was thinking of was not like the female she had brought forth — 'and I have named her Mary, and I commit her and her offspring to Thy protection from Satan, the rejected.'" (5)

Although it apparently looked like Mary's mother's prayers were not answered, God himself explained that it was not so. It is also noteworthy that when Mary was born, her mother prayed for her and for her offspring at the same time. In the Holy Qur'an Allah states:

"So her Lord accepted her with a gracious acceptance and caused her to grow an excellent growth and made Zachariah her guardian. Whenever Zachariah visited her in the chamber, he found with her provisions. He said, 'O Mary, whence hast thou this?' She replied, 'It is from Allah.' Surely, Allah gives to whomsoever He pleases without measure.'" (3:38)

Mary was not an ordinary child, as she had very close contact with God from an early age. This closeness led to Allah ultimately choosing her to give birth to a special son even though no man had touched her. The birth of her son, the prophet Jesus (as) was also the fulfilment of the prayer of Mary's mother who wanted to dedicate her child to God. When an angel gave the news to Mary (as) that she would be blessed with a boy, she was naturally concerned and worried.

The Holy Qur'an records her feelings in these words:

"And the pains of childbirth drove her unto the trunk of a palm-tree. She said, 'O! would that I had died before this and had become a thing quite forgotten!'" (6)

At that time, an angel guided her how to pass this time until the birth of the child. The Holy Qur'an states:

"Then he called her from beneath her, saying, 'Grieve not. Thy Lord has placed a rivulet below thee...'" (7)

The Qur'an stands testimony to the chastity of Mary (as). When people used to question her about the matter, the best reply she had was that she looked towards her son, Jesus (as) and asked if a man of his caliber and qualities could be a result of an unlawful act.

The Holy Qur'an mentions in the following words:

"Then she pointed to him. They said, 'How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?'" (8)

Thus, in Jesus (as) and his noble mother Mary (as), the prayer of the woman of Imran was answered. The Holy Qur'an testifies to the noble character of Mary(as) as she has been declared a role model for Muslims.

"And his mother was a truthful woman." (9)

"And remember when the angels said, 'O Mary, Allah has chosen thee and purified thee and chosen thee above the women of all peoples.'" (10)

The Holy Qur'an also mentions the example of Assiya, the wife of Pharaoh, as a role model for Muslims:

"And Allah sets forth for those who believe the example of the wife of Pharaoh when she said, 'My Lord! build for me a house with Thee in the Garden; and deliver me from Pharaoh and his work, and deliver me from the wrongdoing people...'" (11)

The wife of Pharaoh symbolizes those who are in a state of Nafse Lawwama (The Self Reproaching Soul) where she was not able to completely disassociate with evil influences but had recognized the truth despite fear and remained steadfast.

At the turn of the 20th Century, many people were witness to the incidents of acceptance of prayer of another pious woman, Hazrat Sayyedah Nusrat Jehan Begum (ra), the wife of the Promised Messiah and founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

It is reported that Hazrat Nusrat Jehan Begum (ra) was raising a young orphan girl named Aaminah in her household. When Aaminah grew up and got married and neared giving birth to her own child, she got very sick, to the point where her life appeared to be endangered. At that time, a request for prayers was made to Hazrat Nusrat Jehan Begum (ra), who decided to visit her and prayed:

"I didn't raise you so that I would then have to bring up your orphaned children. May Allah Almighty bless you with health so that you can bring up your own children" (12)

With the grace of Allah, after that prayer, Aaminah started to improve and was blessed with a healthy child and a subsequent long life.

As we see from the examples of Mary (as), Assiya (as), and Nusrat Jehan Begum (ra), the power of prayer as recorded in history and in the Holy Quran was by no means limited to only men. These women have been role models of spiritual development and have no doubt set a very high standard for all of us to aspire towards and be recipients of God's favors.

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# Prayer and Meditation

Zia H Shah MD

The word 'course,' can have a lot of different meanings depending on what context you are using it in. In a university setting it means your syllabus, in a golf game it signifies the landscape spread in front of you and in a restaurant, it refers to the series of dishes served.

Likewise, the word 'meditation' means different things to different readers. To some it means formally sitting down in a yoga position for a given period and going through a formal ritual. But, I have something different in mind today. Our mind is giving us a constant, an unceasing running commentary on our life during our waking hours. For a moment it focuses on the work at hand and then flies to a future ambition or to a past regret. Before that thought is even completed our attention catapults to a worry of the future and then jumps from there to life after death and on and on without tiring. In other words, a constant music is playing in our minds and often without our choosing. Often the song is broken and we cannot get a consistent happy song to play in our mind tracks, even though that is what we crave. In other words, meditation is the sum total of our mental processes, our thoughts, emotions, ambitions and fears running and jamming into each other. Can we tame the beast? Can our thought processes run smoothly under our command like a well trained horse? The whole nine yards is meditation and taming it is the task of this article.

Taming and training our minds is critical to our success in our worldly life and our salvation in the life to come because our mental state is who we are.

There is no single recipe and there is no short cut to success. It is a lifelong endeavor and a search for the right ideas and the right practices to achieve the desired goal. There are countless self help books, both good and bad in secular literature, but they often leave the domain of religion and spirituality untouched.

The human mind is such that something has to hold its attention, an idea, a pursuit that one dwells on or obsesses over and is consumed by. For many it is a material goal, a person or fame. However, the holy Quran says that such endeavors are a mirage: "And as to those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one thinks it to be water until, when he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing. And he finds Allah near him, Who then

fully pays him his account; and Allah is swift at reckoning." (1)

For a believer the focus of attention has to be constantly the All Powerful and Eternal God. The holy Quran says: "Say, 'My Prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds.'" (2) The writings of the Promised Messiah, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, are replete with our constant and over arching need for devotion to the Al Rehman and Al Raheem God of Islam, the Lord of Mercy. See the chapter on Allah in the Essence of Islam, Volume I. (3)

In Christian literature the best dissertation on devotion to One God of the Abrahamic faiths is a book, The Purpose Driven Life, which is a devotional book written by Reverend Rick Warren. The book topped the Wall Street Journal best seller charts as well as Publishers Weekly charts, with over 30 million copies sold by 2007. (4) A few changes here and there, substituting the Unitarian God of Judaism, Unitarian Christianity and Islam for emphasis on Jesus and substituting some Quranic verses for the Biblical ones can make this book perfectly kosher for the Muslim and Jewish readers. So, the most important part of taming our minds is a constant Zikr e Ilahi or meditating on various attributes of Allah and the verses of the holy Quran that are most akin to our psychological needs. My personal favorites are cataloged in the references.(5) I have previously written on





this theme in the Muslim Sunrise: 'Doctor's Orders: 20 Minutes of Meditation Twice a Day' – How about 10 Minutes 5 Times a Day? (6)

We need to constantly glorify Allah, until we begin to feel a degree of peace, serenity and a certainty that we are in His safe custody, as is said in the Quran: "Glorify thy Lord praising Him, and be of those who prostrate themselves before Him. And keep on Glorifying until a state of certainty is bestowed to thee." (7)

Prayers or Dua if not followed by appropriate actions are considered to be making fun of the religious teaching of Providence. So, what are the thought processes that we need to train and tame our minds? A lot of modern literature on meditation comes to our rescue here. Two commendable resources are, Practicing Mindfulness: An Introduction to Meditation(8) by Prof. Mark Muesse and The Science of Mindfulness: A Research-Based Path to Well-Being(9) by Ronald D. Siegel, Psy.D.; Harvard University.

To overcome pessimism, negative thinking and despair we need to constantly guide our thought processes towards hope and optimism. In this regard I have found that the best teacher for individual growth is a Christian Pastor, Joel Osteen and there are scores of his videos available in YouTube. Listening to a Christian teacher, some Muslims worry about the influence of the Christian dogma and I don't have the slightest fear of those false doctrines, as we have scores of amazing articles to present a rational form of Christianity and expose the absurdity of her dogma like

Trinity, divinity of Jesus, birth of God, Original Sin and Eucharist. For the purpose of online links in the Muslim Times, to expose these dogmas, please go the references.(10) In this age of information we can perhaps learn from all teachers regardless of religion and develop genuine interfaith tolerance and enhance our insights.

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults in the United States age 18 and older, or 18.1% of the population every year. (11) It's estimated that 16.2 million adults in the United States, or 6.7 percent of American adults, have had at least one major depressive episode in a given year. (12) Less severe depression is even more common. Columbia University reported that depression increased significantly among persons in the U.S. from 2005 to 2015, from 6.6 percent to 7.3 percent. Notably, the rise was most rapid among those ages 12 to 17, increasing from 8.7 percent in 2005 to 12.7 percent in 2015. (13)

Given these odds the importance of understanding prayers and meditation and putting these into practice cannot be overstated. This article is an effort in this regards and in conclusion, I want to link a few useful articles that we have aggregated in the last few years in the Muslim Times. (14,15,16,17,18,19,20)

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# NEWS VIEWS, & REVIEWS

## China Has Detained Up to a Million Muslims. Here's What You Need to Know

Karen Leigh , September 5, 2018

# Bloomberg

China's efforts to quash what it says is separatism and religious extremism among its ethnic Muslim population have turned the far western region of Xinjiang into one of the world's most heavily policed areas. Multiple accounts have emerged of secretive "re-education camps" that, according to a United Nations committee's assessment, have detained tens of thousands to "upwards of 1 million" Uighurs. As its mosques are shuttered and travel across its borders restricted, Xinjiang -- once at the intersection of ancient Silk Road trade routes -- threatens to become a black hole in President Xi Jinping's effort to build new ones. The international community is taking note, with U.S. lawmakers calling for sanctions.

### 1. Who are the Uighurs?

The Uighurs (pronounced WEE-gurs) are a Turkic-speaking Chinese ethnic minority of mostly Sunni Muslims. They comprise some 10 million of the 22 million people who populate Alaska-sized Xinjiang. Uighurs have close ethnic and cultural ties to Central Asia and some refer to Xinjiang as East Turkestan.

### 2. What triggered China's crackdown?

Maintaining its grip on far-off Xinjiang has long challenged China and its leaders say the campaign is subduing "separatist forces" that reject their rule and foment unrest. Violence in the region has spiked as Xi has vowed to resist attempts to split territory from China. Ethnic riots erupted in the capital Urumqi in 2009, killing almost



200 people. Police then connected Uighurs to an attack near Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 2013, in which a sports-utility vehicle rammed a crowd, killing two tourists. In 2014, police sentenced four people they said had "Uighur names" -- three received the death penalty -- after a terror attack in the city of Kunming. The spread of violence, rights groups say, intensified the crackdown on Uighurs' speech, movement and culture.

### 3. How is the government clamping down?

Through a widespread network of security cameras, police stations and checkpoints. Residents have been ordered to install satellite-tracking systems in their vehicles, submit to facial scans when entering markets or fuel stations and are generally forbidden from traveling abroad. Xinjiang, with just 1.5 percent of China's population, last year accounted for one-fifth of all criminal arrests. The region is, as Bloomberg News reported, a test site for China's powerful state surveillance apparatus, including new facial-recognition technology. The Associated Press says a culture of fear has been instilled: One major town had police depots every 500 meters (1,600 feet), with armed motorcades patrolling streets and checking phones for religious material.

#### 4. How does China justify its campaign?

By calling it “counterterrorism,” Xi has ordered authorities to “strike first” against Islamist extremism, amid reports that as many as 5,000 Uighurs were fighting alongside terror groups in Syria. Beijing authorities have described the re-education camps as providing “vocational training,” according to the AP. A government spokesman said the UN estimates for detainees at the camps were based on “unverified and irresponsible information that has no factual basis at all.” The Global Times, a nationalistic tabloid run by the ruling Communist Party, asserted in an August editorial that authorities had helped salvage Xinjiang from turmoil and prevented it from becoming another Syria. “It has avoided the fate of becoming ‘China’s Syria’ or China’s Libya,” the paper said.

#### 5. How is the world reacting?

The UN and European Union have expressed concern, but the most serious reaction to date has come from a group of U.S. lawmakers led by Senator Marco Rubio and Representative Chris Smith. In an Aug. 28 letter to Trump administration officials, they proposed using the Global Magnitsky Act of 2016 -- previously deployed to sanction Russian oligarchs and Turkish officials -- to freeze the travel and assets of officials including Xinjiang party chief

Chen Quanguo. The governments of Muslim-majority nations, meanwhile, have largely remained silent, refraining from public statements. Their reasons are threefold: Most enjoy a friendly relationship with China, a major trade partner and aid donor. The police state in Xinjiang has made it nearly impossible for outsiders to gather first-hand information about alleged abuses that might be taking place there. And the Beijing government’s policy of not inserting itself into other nations’ foreign policy might now be paying dividends.

#### 6. What about China’s neighbors?

The crackdown is taking place in the heart of the Belt and Road, Xi’s global flagship trade and infrastructure initiative. Xinjiang is positioned at the imagined crossroads of possible new economic routes to and from Central Asia. And China’s treatment of Muslims has gained attention in at least one neighbor central to those ambitions. An undocumented ethnic-Kazakh Chinese citizen recently testified that she had been forced to teach in a camp before escaping. Kazakhstan authorities didn’t deport her.





## Dutch anti-Islam lawmaker cancels blasphemous caricatures contest

AP | Dawn.com, August 30, 2018

# DAWN



Dutch anti-Islam lawmaker Geert Wilders has cancelled the planned caricatures contest following "death threats and concerns other people could be put at risk". In a written statement issued on Thursday night, Wilders said he has decided "not to let the cartoon contest go ahead."

Wilders, who has for years lived under round-the-clock protection because of death threats sparked by his fierce anti-Islam rhetoric, said he does not want others endangered by the contest he planned for November. The contest was to have been held at the tightly guarded offices of his Party for Freedom in the Dutch parliament building.

Meanwhile, the Dutch government had been at pains to distance itself from the contest. Prime Minister Mark Rutte last week questioned Wilders' motive for organizing the contest.

The announcement regarding the cancellation of the contest comes shortly after Prime Minister Imran Khan issued a statement saying the act was hurting the sentiments of Muslims living all around the world.

PM Khan urged all Muslim countries to use the platform of United Nations to convey to the western world how Muslims feel when their religious sentiments are repeatedly hurt by disrespecting the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry termed it a victory of the Pakistani nation, saying it was made possible by diplomatic efforts on the directives of PM Khan.

Soon after the announcement, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi held a media talk accompanied by Tehreek-i-Labbaik leaders and requested them to call off their protest and disperse peacefully following the cancellation of the blasphemous contest.

The foreign minister congratulated the nation and Muslim Ummah on their moral victory and termed the cancellation of the contest a victory for Pakistan on the diplomatic front.

**'I ward them off with a cricket bat': Indian farmers despair over marauding cows**  
**Amrit Dhillon in Uttar Pradesh**  
**Wed 29 Aug 2018**

# The Guardian

By day, Munidev Tyagi is a farmer, growing rice, maize, lentils and sorghum. By night, he turns watchman, guarding his fields in Sahibpur village in Uttar Pradesh against the stray cows that trample and maraud on his fields, eating his precious crops.

He is not a happy man.

"I don't get more than a couple of hours sleep. The last few crops were badly damaged. It's a huge problem. I ward them off with my son's cricket bat but they keep coming back," said Tyagi.

The stray cows, numbering hundreds, belong to dairy farmers in the area. Once they cease to give milk, farm-

ers can't afford to keep feeding them. Previously, they used to sell unproductive cows to the local abattoir for a small sum of money. But now, with the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) government in Uttar Pradesh aggressively enforcing anti-cow slaughter laws, the situation is very different.

The BJP has closed down the small butcher's shops (mainly Muslim-owned) that used to dot the countryside. In addition, it has mobilized its supporters: bands of right-wing Hindu "gau rakshaks" or cow vigilantes who patrol the countryside like private militias, ready to rain violence on anyone selling or buying a cow for slaughter.

Having stoked Hindu passions over the cow to come to power, the Narendra Modi government effectively legitimized cow vigilantes who have lynched Muslims and Dalits, who they believe are slaughtering cows. Human Rights Watch reported that in the two years up to April 2017 at least 10 Muslims, including a 12-year-old boy, were killed during mob attacks related to the campaign against beef consumption.

Fear of these attacks has meant that in many parts of India, cows have become the farmer's enemy. Sleep-deprived and frantic to protect their crops, farmers hold night-long vigils, spend money they can ill afford on fencing or putting barbed wire around their fields, and arm themselves with sticks and stones. In some cases, they have thrown acid on cows.

As a Hindu, Tyagi reveres the cow. But not so much that he is willing for them to ruin his livelihood.

"It's madness. The dairy farmers in my village don't let their cattle loose here because we know them. They let them loose in another village. The cows from other villages are let loose in my village. I can't spend my life shooing away cows. I've got other things to do. But the BJP cares more about cows than farmers," said Tyagi. I can't spend my life shooing away cows

Cow slaughter has been banned for years in about 20 of India's 29 states out of respect for the sentiments of Hindus who venerate the cow. But in reality, officials were rarely bothered about what was happening on

the ground in remote villages where Hindu farmers regularly sold their unproductive cows to the local Muslim butchers. This trade, albeit technically illegal, flourished.

In March 2017, the Uttar Pradesh government closed down hundreds of what it called "illegal" abattoirs, leaving farmers with nowhere to take their cows. Other BJP state governments have also shut down cattle fairs where farmers used to sell unproductive or ageing cows either for meat or leather.

"All farmers used to sell, under the radar, their old cows. Do you know much fodder costs? Do you know how many men it takes to lift a sick cow to clean the shed? After stopping giving milk, a cow can live for another 20 years. Do they feed their children or their cows? It's absurd to expect a farmer to keep them just because your ideology says so," said political commentator Chandra Bhan Prasad.

Radha Kant Vats who runs a cow shelter in the Indian capital, says that farmers should hand over unproductive cows to cow shelters like his. "We will look after them and give them an old age full of dignity and love." Most BJP politicians also say the same thing but state-run cow shelters are in short supply and in many of them cows are kept hungry and in overcrowded and filthy conditions. Many of the animals die of starvation or neglect.

Earlier this month, angry villagers chased a herd of cows into a shelter in Chhattisgarh state and locked them in. Reports said 18 died of suffocation.

Meanwhile, the cow's enhanced social status has become something of a running joke in India. Stand-up comic Varun Grover asks audiences if they have noticed a distinctly more confident demeanor in the stray cows on the roads.

"Before they used to be apologetic, clinging to the sides of the roads, taking up little space. Now, they park themselves bang in the middle as though to say 'hey, it's our time now'"

By Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian  
The Promised Messiah and Mahdi (as)

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*O ye who have not been granted enlightenment,  
I do not mind what you say about me;*

*I only say all this out of sympathy and as honest advice,  
So that this ointment may heal the deep wounds;*

*Try to remedy with prayer,  
The loss you have incurred by rejecting prayer;*

*If you can't get intoxicated, still, more wine is the remedy,  
You who say: Show me, If there is any power in prayer;*

*Run towards me; I will show you its power,  
As clear as the shining sun;*

*Beware! do not deny the wonders of Divine omnipotence,  
Come now, let me show you how prayers are accepted!*

Translation by Wajeeh Bajwa

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# FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Muslim Sunrise (Volume LIV First Quarter 1987 Number 1)

## The Power of Prayer

(Masud Ahmad Qazi, M.D., Streamwood, IL)

What is Prayer? Prayer is nothing but communication with God Almighty. Prayer is our link and our bond with our Creator. Prayer teaches humility and inculcates submissiveness. It purifies the soul and cleanses the spirit. For a momin or a true believer, it is a means of achieving perfect union with the Almighty; obtaining perfect contentment and perfect submission. It is an uplifting and exhilarating experience for a pious servant of the Almighty God. It fosters a keen insight and true understanding of our glorious God. Sincere and true prayer sears the soul and ignites the spirit. The Promised Messiah (as) has called it a form of death and said:

“When prayer is offered in great tribulation so that the soul melts and flows at the threshold of the Divine, that is true prayer and it is God’s way that when such a prayer is offered, He accepts it or responds to it in some other manner.”

Worship is mentioned in the Holy Quran 152 times, bowing 15 times, prostration 74 times, and prayer 99 times. Thus, the Holy Quran has placed tremendous emphasis on the significance of prayer. God Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

“And when my servants ask thee about Me, say I am near. I answer the prayer of a supplicant when he prays to Me so they should harken to Me and believe in Me, that they may follow the right way”. (2:187)

God also declares:

“Call on me, I shall respond to you.” (40:61)

Duaa is an integral and essential part of Ibadat which is itself closely connected with Abudiyyat. The Holy Quran claims that the very purpose of man’s creation is Ibadat or worship. Thus it follows that prayer is the very essence of worship and the hallmark of a true servant of God. God’s attribute of Rahmiyyat demands that we pray to Him to attract His mercy and clemency. From Sura ‘Fatiha to An-Naas, the Quran

constantly exhorts us to pray. We recite:

“O, Allah guide us along the right path”

in our five daily prayer. And before that

“Thee alone do we worship and  
Thee alone do we implore for help.”

It tells us to remember the Greatness, the Glory and absolute Power of God and also our utter helplessness and humility.

A true worshiper knows these two essential requirements of prayer. Firstly, that the Almighty God has the power to foster and to develop and bestow mercy and reward. Secondly, that man can achieve nothing without the help and support of the Divine. Once these two concepts are firmly rooted and deeply ingrained in the heart of a worshiper, his heart melts, all arrogance and pride is washed away and at last a spiritual stage arrives that concern for himself and the world surrounding him leaves him instead in such a state of selflessness that he is totally lost and immersed in the love of God. This condition is called the straight path by God, which a servant has been instructed to seek through the supplication, which is to say that, bestow upon us the path of losing of self in the Unity of God and love of God (which has been indicated in the previous verses) and cut us asunder from everything beside Thee.

Among the numerous blessings of Ahmadiyyat is the belief in prayer and our re-introduction to a Living God and a Living faith. With the generalized and widespread decay and deterioration among Muslims and their moral and spiritual debasement, they were deprived of the numerous blessings of a Living faith. Among the many nefarious beliefs which took root was the conviction that God Almighty does not speak anymore to anyone, as if He was no longer Samee, Kaleem and Khabeer. That prayer is useless since destiny or

Taqdeer is pre-determined and therefore prayer will not and cannot influence anything. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who was a great scholar and educationist, was one of the main spokesmen for this ideology.

This view was most forcefully and emphatically rejected by Hazrat Ahmad, The Promised Messiah. He wrote volumes about prayer and its true significance. Particularly in the celebrated book, Barakaatud Duaa, he beautifully expounded the philosophy of prayer and decimated the false arguments and statements put forward by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. He declared:

“Our Ever Living and All Sustaining God talks to me like one person talks to another. I ask Him something and supplicate to Him, and He answers in words full of power. If this should happen a thousand times, He does not fail to answer. In His words, He discloses wonderful hidden matters and displays scenes of extraordinary powers till He makes it clear that He alone is the One who should be called God. He accepts prayers and intimates their acceptance. He resolves great difficulties and through repeated supplications revives those who are sick unto death. He discloses all these designs of His in advance, through His words which relate to future events. He proves that He is the God of heaven and earth. He addressed me and told me that He would safeguard me against death by plague and all those who dwell in my house in Piety and righteousness. Who else is there in this age except myself who has published such a revelation and disclosed God’s promise concerning the members of his family and other pious people who dwell within his house.”

The real benefit of prayer is the patience, endurance and steadfastness which God bestows upon the yearning heart of a true believer. Ultimately his heart is filled with the redolent fragrance of the Love of God. Spiritual elevation and exaltation follows and an irrevocable bond develops between God Almighty and his true servant. The conditions for the acceptance of prayer include eagerness, steadfastness, purity, truthfulness, perfect certainty, perfect love, and perfect attention. Also the objective should not be contrary to the Divine design for the welfare in this world and in the Hereafter if the supplicant is for whom supplication is being offered. One should not and cannot expect or demand instantaneous results either. There may be delays with the inherent benefit of strengthening the resolve, the courage and the understanding of the true believer. And yes, there are trials.

“It may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and it may be that you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows and you know not”

God Almighty surely tests us with trials.

“And we will try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of wealth, and lives and fruits but give glad tidings to those who patiently, persevere. Who when a misfortune overtakes them say ‘surely to Allah we belong and to Him we shall return.’” (2:156-157)

And before this God says:

“O Ye who believe seek help through perseverance and prayer surely Allah is with those who patiently persevere.” (2:154)

So it is clear that at times God Almighty accepts the prayers but enforces His Will and His authority and Divine Decree, for He is the All Powerful, the Master of all the worlds and His Will prevails. A true believer accepts the Will of God cheerfully, shows fortitude, courage and steadfastness and God says give glad tidings to the “steadfast”.

Thus prayer is a means by which the power of God is manifested, the august Majesty and absolute Power of the Almighty reveals itself. From time immemorial, prayer has caused miracles to happen, Abraham remaining unharmed, unscratched in the pit of fire, Noah was saved from the great deluge, Lot and Jonah were protected Jesus Christ was delivered from the cross. And our Holy Prophet eventually was victorious and triumphant. Hazrat Ahmad also majestically manifested the power of prayer. It was his prayer that destroyed Pandit Lekhram and Alexander Dowie and so many others with all their arrogance and conceit. God also bestowed upon his true companions and followers the blessing of acceptance of prayer. Thousands of signs were shown by his illustrious companions and followers. And once again, the world was awe-struck and dumbfounded by the power of prayer and the power of the living God and the living Prophet and Living Faith of Islam.

Today, it is only through Ahmadiyyat or the true Islam that this power of God Almighty, the God of Mohammad and the God of Ahmad, is manifested in its full glory and majesty. Who among us can deny the miracles of prayer and can refute the magnificent Glory and Power of Allah, the All Powerful and All Sustaining.

I bear personal witness that Allah continually showered his blessings on my father just like he did on numerous others. They were all blessed with this Divine gift of acceptance of prayer. God had promised my father, a promise with the Holy Prophet which had been fulfilled numerous times in the past that God will protect you against the people, and he was protected. A sworn enemy of Ahmadiyyat came up behind him one day in the street, pulled out a loaded gun and started firing. The bullet got stuck in the barrel of the gun and no matter how much he tried it would neither go forward nor

could it be ejected. My father disarmed him quickly and handed him over to the police. And once again the world witnessed a mighty sing of Hazrat Ahmad:

“Fire is my Servant, Rather a Servant of my Servants.”

In conclusion, I want to quote one or two passages of Hazrat Ahmad which reflect his keen insight and true love of God and Muhammad.

“Blessed are the prisoners who supplicate and do not get tired, for they shall one day be released; blessed are the blind ones who persevere in their prayers, for one day they shall see. Blessed are those who are in the graves and seek the help of God through supplication, for one day they shall be taken out of their graves. Blessed are you who do not get tired in your prayers and your souls melt while you pray and your eyes shed tears and a fire is lit in your breasts and you are driven into dark chambers and wild forests, seeking solitude and you are rendered restless and mad and unconscious of self, for in the end you will become the recipients of grace. The God on whom we call, is very benevolent and Merciful and Modest and True and Faithful and Compassionate to those who are humble. You should also become faithful and supplicate with full sincerity and loyalty so that He should have mercy on you. Withdraw from the tumult of the world and do not make your faith a matter of personal contention. Accept defeat for the sake of God so that you might become heirs to great victories. God will show a miracle to those who pray and will bestow extraordinary favors upon those who beg. Prayer comes from God and returns to Him through prayer. God comes close to you as your life is close to you.

“In short, prayer is that sovereign remedy which coverts a handful of dust into precious metal. It is the water that washes out inner impurities. With prayer the soul melts and, flowing like water, falls at the threshold of the Divine. It stands before God and bows down before Him so that the Salat that Islam teaches becomes its reflection. The standing of the soul in prayer is that it is prepared to endure every misfortune for the sake of God and is eager to carry out His commands, and its bowing down means that discarding all other loves and relationships, it leans towards God and becomes His, and its prostration is that falling at the threshold of God, it loses itself altogether and wipes out its own being. This is the Salat which brings about a meeting between God and the worshipper.

“The sign of a true religion is that through its teaching such righteous ones should continue to arise who should arrive at the state of a Muhaddas, to whom God Almighty should speak face to face. The foremost sign of the truth of Islam is that all through, it produces such righteous ones with whom God Almighty talks, as it is said in the Holy Quran:

“Angles descend upon them reassuring them, fear not, nor grieve.” (41:31)

“This is the test of a true, living and acceptable religion. We know that this light is to be found only in Islam that the Christian Faith is without such light.

“We can furnish conclusive proof to every seeker after truth that from the time of our lord and master, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) up to da, in every century, there have appeared men of God through whom God Almighty has guided other people by the display of heavenly signs. Of these were Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani, Abul Hasan Harqani, Abu Yazid Bustami, etc.

“Their number exceeded thousands and so many extraordinary happenings concerning them are set out in the books of the learned ones that even a very bigoted opponent has to admit that these people manifested extraordinary signs and miracles. I tell you truly that through my research, so far as it is possible for one to discover about the past, I have come to the conclusion that the number of heavenly signs in support of Islam and as a testimony of the truth of the Holy Prophet, which have been manifested through the Aulia of this Ummat is not to be equaled in the history of other religions. Islam is the only religion which has progressed through heavenly signs and its numberless lights and blessings have ever demonstrated the existence of God Almighty as if He was visible close at hand. Be sure that on the score of its heavenly signs Islam has not been put to shame in any age. In this age of yours you could, if you wished, be the witnesses of signs in support of Islam. Is there any other religion in the world which can produce such testimony?...

“The signs of the truth of the Holy Prophet (saw) whom they reject are visible in this age like pouring rain. For seekers, the gates of heavenly signs are as open today as they were in any previous age and for those who are hungry after truth, the banquet of bounties is as much available today as it was before. A Living faith has always the Hand of the Living God at its back and such a faith is Islam.”





# Questions & Answers

## What is the best prayer?

The most excellent prayer which instructs us concerning the time and occasion of supplication and depicts before us the picture of spiritual zeal is the one that God, the Beneficent, has taught us in the opening chapter of the Holy Quran. It is as follows

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾

All worthiness of praise belongs to Allah alone who is the Creator and Sustainer of all the worlds (1:2)

الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣﴾

He provides for us out of His mercy before any action proceeds from us, and after we have acted He rewards our action out of His mercy (1:3)

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٤﴾

He alone is the Master of the Day of judgement and has not committed that day to anyone else (1:4)

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾

O Thou Who dost comprehend all these attributes, we worship Thee alone and seek Thy help in all our affairs (1:5). The use of the plural pronoun in the context indicates that all our faculties are occupied in His worship and are prostrate at His threshold. Every person by virtue of his inner faculties is a multiple entity and the prostration of all his faculties before God is the condition that is called Islam.

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ﴿٧﴾

Guide us along Thy straight path and establish us firmly on it (1:6), the path of those upon whom Thou has bestowed Thy bounties and favors.

غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٨﴾

And not of those who have incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who went astray and, did not reach Thee (1:7).

Ameen

(The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam written by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam).

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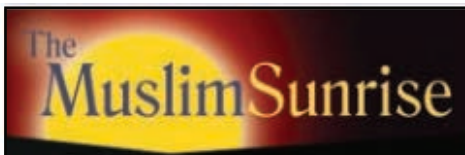
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